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A Knightly Heritage

A DRAMA

By GEROLT GIBSON

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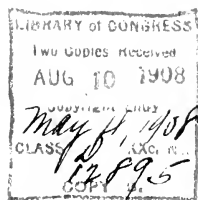
BY

Gerolt Gibson

ST. LOUIS, MO., U. S. A.

AUTHOR'S EDITION

Published also in London by
PHILIP MIDDLETON JUSTICE
55 and 56 Chancery Lane



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SAM'L F. MYERSON PRINTING COMPANY
Third and Chestnut Streets
SAINT LOUIS, Mo.

TMP92-009148

Dramatis Personae.



WALTER VERNON.

At 15 years of age.

At 31 years of age.

HON. RICHARD VERNON.

MRS. SARAH BOSTWICK.

MISS NELLIE BOSTWICK.

MRS. MOLLIE WEYMES.

MISS MARJORIE KNOLLYS.

PETER HUTCHINS.

HECTOR CLOMAN.

JAMES BRYCE.

WILLIE STOKES.

DONALD MACGEOGHEGAN.

MATTHEW HALEY.

MRS. BURKE.

MRS. CASSIDY.

POMPEY (colored).

JAMES, The Butler.

AN INDIAN GUIDE.

THE "FIVE SENSES" IMPERSONATED—"Sight,"
"Sound," "Smell," "Taste," "Touch."

"LOYALTY" IMPERSONATED.



PROLOGUE—*In Baltimore, 1890.*

FIRST ACT—*In Green Moss Valley, 1906.*

SECOND ACT—*In Baltimore.*

THIRD ACT—*In Baltimore.*

FOURTH ACT—*In Green Moss Valley.*

A KNIGHTLY HERITAGE



Prologue



The scene takes place in the house of Gov. Vernon in Baltimore in 1890. The walls are hung with pictures of colonial ancestors. An old sword is hanging on the wall. Mrs. Bostwick and Gov. Vernon are standing talking. Walter Vernon is sitting at a table reading a book. The appointments of the room are very elegant in the style of that day. Gov. Vernon is dressed as an old school southern gentleman, with broadcloth frock coat and fluffy shirt. He is very courtly. Mrs. Bostwick is stylishly dressed. As they talk Walter Vernon closes his book and listens to the conversation.

Mrs. Bostwick.

And I want you to make us a speech. It is just a little dinner I am giving myself, but all the ladies are Colonial Dames, and the men are Sons of Colonial Wars, and, of course, we want the most distinguished member there. You will be sure to come, won't you, Governor, you and Margaret?

Gov. Vernon.

Why, yes; I shall be happy to.

Mrs. Bostwick.

It is so inspiring to compare genealogies, and recite the noble deeds of our ancestors. You know, I am descended from General Putnam. Governor, tell me all about your portraits. Who is this?

Gov. Vernon.

That is Captain Spencer. He belonged to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery.

Mrs. Bostwick.

How fine. And this one?

Gov. Vernon.

That is my grandfather, Col. Robert Vernon. He was an officer under Washington. After the Revolutionary War he was enrolled as one of the Cincinnati.

Mrs. Bostwick.

That is lovely. This is the one I like best. Sir Richard Vernon. He was knighted by King Charles the First, wasn't he?

Gov. Vernon.

Yes. He was a cavalier and a tenant of the crown. In the war with Parliament, he mortgaged his estates, melted the family plate and raised a troop for the royal cause. At Edgehill he fought so well he was knighted on the field by the King himself as a knight banneret royal. At Marston Moor he went down in a flood of carnage overborne by greater numbers, but not conquered;—a will of iron, concealed beneath the cloak of gentle manners; loyal to the core, and a fighter to the end. He was found on a pile of corpses, pierced through and through, his sword in his hand, dripping with the blood of the enemy. This is the sword here. It was brought over by his grandson, who emigrated to the Colony of Virginia in 1705.

We prize it as an heirloom. It was worn by Col. Robert Vernon under Washington.

Mrs. Bostwick.

Isn't it just too lovely to possess such things!
(*He has taken the old sword from off the wall and is showing it to Mrs. Bostwick.*)

Gov. Vernon.

It is said as long as we own this sword no member of our family can be a craven, or a coward. It is certain none ever has been.

Mrs. Bostwick.

How beautiful! Perfectly lovely! It gives you such a fine social position!

Pompey (colored).

'Scuse me, Govehnuh, de Missus send wu'd she raidy if Mrs. Bostwick raidy to go out wif hel.
(*Governor Vernon goes over and hangs up the old sword.*)

Mrs. Bostwick.

Good-bye, Walter.

Walter.

(Shaking hands)—Good-bye, Mrs. Bostwick.

Mrs. Bostwick.

Come over to see me and little Nellie.

Walter.

Thank you, I will.

Mrs. Bostwick.

(To Governor Vernon)—I am sorry to discontinue our delightful conversation. But I shall see you at the dinner.

Gov. Vernon.

I shall be delighted. Pray permit me to accompany you out to the carriage. Pompey, is the carriage ready?

Pompey.

Yes, suh. It waitin' outside.

(Exeunt Mrs. Bostwick and Governor Vernon.)

Walter.

(Dramatically, much to Pompey's consternation)—
"At Edgehill he fought so well he was knighted on the field by the king himself, as a knight banneret royal! At Marston Moor he went down in a flood of carnage, overborne by greater numbers, but not conquered;—a will of iron, concealed beneath the cloak of gentle manners; loyal to the core, and a fighter to the end! He was found on a pile of corpses, pierced through and through, his sword in his hand, dripping with the blood of the enemy!"

Pompey.

(Trembling in terror)—Lawd a mehcy, Mahse Walter, is you talkin' to a ghos'?

Walter.

Of course not, stupid!

Pompey.

Den who you a-talkin' to about dem cohpses and swohds drippin' wif blood!

Walter.

I wasn't talking to anybody. I was just telling about my ancestors.

Pompey.

Oooh! Your ants-ants-yes, suh. What did you call 'em?

Walter.

You goose!

Pompey.

Ah know whut you a doin'. You jes' makin' a speech all to yoh se'f. Ah kin make speeches, too.

Walter.

You can? What about?

Pompey.

Las' night Ah wus at de prayeh meetin' an' de pahson say "Bru'er Pompey, we likes to heah you 'xtemporize de sagacity o' yoh unbrageous 'pinion about de liquoh question." An Ah say, "Brevren an' Sistern. De mos' cantankerous proposition conflagratn' de Amehican people today am de liquoh question. We mus' stan' up like a man in de midst ob a roaring fuhnace an' face de multitoodinous ramifications ob dis obnoxious contention wif de indivisible fax in de case."

Walter.

What on earth are you talking about?

Pompey. .

Ah's telling you all about ma speech at de meetin'. An' den Ah say, "Will you be foun' wif de sheep o' wif de goats?" An' Bru'er Poindexteh say he rudder be foun' wif de chickens if he gona git foun' at all. An' Ah says to him: "Bru'er Poindexteh, Ah is completely transmogrified at yoh amalgamated ignorance."

Walter.

What!

Pompey.

Ah said, "Ah is completely transmogrified at yoh amalgamated ignorance."

Walter.

You mean mortified—mortified at his amazing ignorance.

Pompey.

Whut's dat?

Walter.

Mortified.

Pompey.

Muggified.

Walter.

Mortified.

Pompey.

No, suh! It wus a heap wuhse 'n dat! Transmogrified! An' so dey all say dey gona vote foh me.

Walter.

Well, which side are you on, wet or dry?

Pompey.

Ah's on de side dey all gona vote foh.

Walter.

Which side is that?

Pompey.

Dat ain't come up yit. Ah's gona wait an' see. Ah's a colohed gentleman o' cibility.

(Enter Governor Vernon. Exit Pompey.)

Walter.

(Very seriously)—Father, can I be a soldier?

Gov. Vernon.

A soldier!

Walter.

(Dramatically)—Yes. I want to fight and be a gentle-

man like our ancestors, to rally to the beat of the drum, led on by the flag of our country to honor and to victory, or to a glorious death!

Gov. Vernon.

The fighter of today displays his hardihood in the constructive arts of peace, rather than in the devastation of war. You will have plenty of chance to show your pluck.

Walter.

But I want to win glory and distinction!

Gov. Vernon.

That can be done in many ways. It is a practical world. We must strive for individual prosperity.

Walter.

You mean to get rich?

Gov. Vernon.

Yes, honorably so.

Walter.

(Sticking his nose up in the air with a moue)—I don't want to just make money. You have always said it is vulgar to judge a man by how rich he is.

Gov. Vernon.

That is true as a standard; but it is the rich churl that is obnoxious, not the gentleman. And, besides, we are driven to it, Walter. During all my life my first thought has been my country! My country! The public welfare! But what do we see—dishonest army contractors, who never smelt gun-powder, flaunting their ill-gotten millions in the face of the battered patriot! Or giants in the commercial world, whose only standard has been mere selfishness, cold and pitiless, the pride of the nation, and rulers of the age! And shall a family like ours, that has rubbed shoulders

with the chivalry of the world go trailing in the dust behind these money lords? No. We must meet the times, the mercenary age, and look to the pocketbook.

(Peter Hutchins, about thirty years old and James Bryce, about sixty-three years old, are ushered in by Pompey.)

James Bryce.

Howdy, Governor, howdy. *(Shaking hands.)*

Gov. Vernon.

Good morning, Mr. Bryce, glad to see you.

Peter Hutchins.

How do you do, Governor. *(Shaking hands.)*

James Bryce.

Howdy, Walter, how's the pony?

Walter.

Fine. I raced with Charley Bates, and beat him badly.

Gov. Vernon.

Walter, this is Mr. Hutchins.

Peter.

How do you do?

Walter.

(Shaking hands)—I'm glad to meet you, sir.

James Bryce.

Well, so we are all going to get rich, eh, Governor?

Gov. Vernon.

I hope we are making a wise investment, Mr. Bryce, I hope so.

James Bryce.

Mine is but a little chunk beside yours, but I am going in on your judgment, Governor.

Peter.

Gentlemen, there is no better investment than this wonderful timber land in Green Moss Valley. The United States is a big country, streams of immigration pouring in from all over the world, the American people are prolific, population on the increase, towns growing, industries on the boom and lumber used everywhere—the very basis of civilization itself! Here, Governor, I am offering you a principality of one hundred thousand acres for one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, good as gold in the Bank of England, doubling in value every couple of years, can't go down, must rise, best investment in the world!

Gov. Vernon.

It is a beautiful country, as peaceful as Arcadia. I was there last summer, myself. The air is as exhilarating as champagne.

James Bryce.

Is that where you shot the bear?

Gov. Vernon.

Yes. There are all kinds of game, in the very heart of nature, untouched by the hand of man, the primeval forest twittering with song birds and interspersed with glittering lakes.

Peter.

A small river flows through it, so you can float logs down stream.

James Bryce.

A wonderful country!

Gov. Vernon.

An investment rich in profits and a fairy land to go to. Have you brought the title deeds and notes?

Peter.

Yes, sir; in my pocket. Here they are. The deed is signed and sealed by Henry Bixby, the present owner. He bought from Mary Jukes, the widow of Mark Jukes. You know the title is all right.

Gov. Vernon.

I am to give you my check for fifty thousand dollars cash and execute three notes of twenty-five thousand dollars each, payable in five, ten and fifteen years, with interest at 7 per cent.

Peter.

Yes, sir; that's right, sir. I have everything here ready for delivery.

James Bryce.

I am only investing two thousand dollars, but it is next to yours, so if yours is good, mine is too. I am going in on your judgment, Governor.

Gov. Vernon.

Gentlemen, step into the library and we will close the transaction. It is a large investment, but it looks as sound as bed rock to me.

Peter.

No doubt of it; best in the world.

(Exeunt all except Walter. Walter goes over and takes down the old sword. Struts back with rather pompous dignity to the middle of the stage, holding the sword in his hand.)

Walter

(Exaltedly)—This old sword of my ancestors is the emblem of honor, of courage, of manhood! I love it! I swear to be loyal to every trust, true in duty and always a gentleman! Then I shall be worthy of my nation and of my family! An American Gentleman!

(Curtain.)

First Act.

Scene One—In Green Moss Valley, October, 1906.

The object of this scene is to give a beautiful pictorial effect, carrying the audience into a realm of wild nature and her charms, utilizing the best abilities of the scenic painter.

Mountain peaks rise in the distance, veiled in blue smoke. The waters of a lake shimmer in the afternoon sun, flanked by vast stretches of forest trees. Walter Vernon's cabin stands on an eminence in the middle distance. In the foreground on the right is a large rock, with a running spring, surrounded by large trees.

(Enter Peter Hutchins and Indian guide, having just dismounted from their horses.)

(Peter comes in limping so stiffly he can hardly walk.)

Peter.

Oh! I'm so stiff. I can scarcely walk. My legs feel like wood. Darn horse back riding, anyway!

(Feels the seat of his trousers, whistles wheetw!)

I never was spanked so hard before!

(Limps across the stage, shakes his coat and a lot of dust flies off.)

Confound the country!

Indian.

(Pointing to the spring)—Good water, heap cold.

(Indian lies down on his stomach and drinks out of a little pool. Peter

drops his quirt and drinks out of his hand, catching the water as it falls.)

Ah! delicious! (Drinks again.) That is good! The only good thing here, and it is running away as fast as it can.

(Stoops to pick up riding whip.) O murder! I can't do that!

(Feels the seat of his trousers.) Hey, you, Hawk-that-flies-in-the-face-of-the-sun, swoop down and gather up my quirt.

Indian.

(Majestically)—Pale face pick up own quirt!

Peter.

O! why did I ever come out here! O! O!

(Gets down on one knee carefully and recovers his quirt.)

O! how will I ever get up again! Hawk-Hawk—come over here and give me a lift.

Indian.

Pale-face big pappoose!

Peter

(Struggling up)—Well, let's go. I don't know how I will ever get on my horse. Where is Vernon's cabin—how far? Vernon's cabin—whereabouts?

(Indian points to cabin in middle distance.)

Peter.

How far?

Indian.

Half hour ride; good trail; good horse.

Peter.

Confound the horse, and the trail, and the dust and everything! All the green valleys and winding rivers,

mountain peaks and open plains are but desolation to me. Poetry! Bosh! Give me a cemented street, flanked with buildings and alive with the hum of business. That is life and desire. This is weariness. I hate the country.

(Exeunt Peter and Indian.)

Scene Two.

Interior of Walter's cabin in Green Moss Valley. The walls are hung with trophies of the chase—elk, bear, moose, mountain lion heads and skins, eagles, hawks, etc.

On the right is a table covered with implements for assaying ore, retorts, glass jars, scales, etc. An assay furnace is in the background.

Walter Vernon is seated at the table at work with a blow pipe testing minerals. In the prologue Walter was 15 years old; now he is 31.

(Enter Clyde Murdock.)

Murdock is a rough prospector, shaggy beard, slouch hat, flannel shirt, breeches in his boots, belt and revolver strapped around his waist. He is carrying a bag of samples.

Murdock.

Hullo, Walter! Spoutin' fire like a devil?

Walter.

Hello, Murdock! Back again?

Murdock.

You bet I be. Run short o' grub. Ben over on Clear-water Crick. You ben here all the time?

Walter.

Yes. I haven't quite finished assaying those last samples you brought in.

Murdock.

How they gona turn out?

Walter.

Haven't struck any pay dirt yet, rich enough to work.

Murdock.

I ain't never saw no better prospect. Don't it beat hell how things don't pan out? But, say, pard, you git ready fur a surprise party, fur you got one a' comin', though taint on your land. Look a-hyar what I got! You jus' wait a minute.

(Murdock carries a bag over to the table and starts to untie it.)

Walter.

What's this, another lead pipe cinch?

Murdock.

Don't you git gay, young feller—cause this aint no bob tail flush! This is es purty a jack-pot es you ever seen. Wait till I open it, then you'll see sumpin fittin to look at.

(Unties bag and dumps contents on table.)

Walter.

Gold! Placer sand! Where did you get it?

Murdock.

I'd like to see the son-of-a-gun that can beat that!

(Slaps Walter jocosely on the shoulder.)

Walter.

Placer gold! Where did you get it?

Murdock.

(Striking an attitude)—You bet! Whar did I git it? Whar did I git it?

Walter.

It's in a stream somewhere.

Murdock.

Clearwater Crick. In the bottom of the stream—on that Bryce claim, not on yourn. But it's just half a mile above yourn.

Walter.

Was it all in one spot?

Murdock.

No. Panned it in a dozen different places. I bet a barrel of bacon to a box o' matches you got the same lower down stream whar Clearwater Crick runs through your land. That's what I'm a gona strike fur next. Ef the stuff's thar I'll find it.

Walter.

You are allright, Murdock. You're square, too, old man.

Murdock.

So be you. Thar aint a crooked hair on your head; and I says it, too, which the same I knows what I'm talkin' about. I got friends down at the camp. Do you know Patterson that runs the game?

Walter.

I haven't the pleasure.

Murdock.

Say—a feller's gotta blow off steam once in a while, sure! I'll be back yere by mornin' and strike off on the trail agin tomorrer. Say—I gotta ride over to Golden Hope Minin' Camp now. Say—you know Kitty Maloney? She's stuck on me, Kit is. So long, pard. Say—don't shoot ef I come in all in a bunch. So long.

(Murdock starts to go. Peter and the Indian guide enter. Murdock scowls at Peter and walks out, glaring at him over his shoulder.)

Peter.

For heaven's sake, who is that barbarian?

Walter.

Clyde Murdock.

Peter.

He's a wild animal.

Walter.

He is my prospector, and a good one, too.

Peter.

Well, I am going back home tonight.

(Drops into a chair and suddenly rises with a look of pain on his face, feeling the seat of his trousers.)

Walter.

Have you been all over the land?

Peter.

Yes, or pretty near it—enough, anyway, enough.

Walter.

And what do you think of it?

Peter.

A wild and forbidding country. Give me Baltimore, give me Baltimore—or New York.

Walter.

But from a business standpoint?

Peter.

Disappointing, disappointing, very disappointing.

Walter.

(Indignantly)—You mean the value isn't there? A solid growth of forest trees from two to five feet in diameter—how disappointing?

Peter.

Too far to market, too far from the railroads, absolutely in the wilds of nature. A railroad will have to be built before you can sell any of this land, or handle the timber.

Walter.

Let us understand each other. When my father bought, sixteen years ago, he executed three notes of twenty-five thousand dollars each. Two of these notes are not yet paid, and you have bought them from the Henry Bixby estate. They are secured by mortgage on all this one hundred thousand acres of land. Do you mean that the mortgage is not good, that the security is not good?

Peter.

Exactly, exactly. A very poor debt.

Walter.

(Very angrily)—That's a lie, and you know it! This land is now worth fifteen dollars an acre, or a million and a half of value to secure fifty thousand dollars. It is ridiculous—a bad debt!

Peter.

But you can't sell it, you can't sell it, my boy; a thing is worth what you can sell it for.

Walter.

And why can't I sell it? Because you have attacked my title by fraud.

Peter.

I haven't attacked your title. It is William Jukes.

Walter.

And who is William Jukes but your paid agent?

Peter.

He is the son of Mark Jukes.

Walter.

By nature, but not by law. My father bought from Henry Bixby. Henry Bixby bought from Mary Jukes, the widow of Mark Jukes.

Peter.

She was not his widow, because Mark Jukes was previously married. His marriage to her was bigamous. Never being legally his wife, she inherited nothing, and could convey nothing.

Walter.

That is what you have suborned this vile cheat and others to swear to; but it is a lie. His mother may have lived with Mark Jukes in the early days in California, but was not his wife. The affidavits that they were married are perjured testimony, manufactured by your fertile brain and obtained by bribery. Because this young man has been a minor until recently, he is not barred by limitation from bringing suit.

Peter.

You wrong me, you wrong me. It is a serious situation. I am not responsible if men will have two wives.

Walter.

Your scheme is to cloud my title until the law suit is tried next winter, so I can't sell or borrow any money.

In the meanwhile, if I don't raise fifty thousand dollars to pay the two notes on November 17th you will sell me out under the mortgage. How can I raise that much money with my title disputed, and these lands my only asset? The Bixby estate is insolvent and his warranty no good, so I would never get any of the money back.

Peter.

That's not my fault. If people wade in deeper than they can swim, egad, they will have to drown.

Walter.

This imposter, William Jukes, has no more right to my land than you have to the moon. You are a couple of black-hearted villians.

Peter.

What foolish talk! what foolish talk! It is not business, not business.

Walter.

(Indignantly pointing his finger at him)—And as for value, YOU—YOU sold these lands to my father sixteen years ago. There was no question of markets then, no question of railroads. It was all a glittering tale of profits, a shower of gold, a river of prosperity—and now you stultify your own representations, which, in fact, were true, and have come true, every word of them—and the lands are worth all that you ever claimed, and more!

Peter.

I was young then—poor judgment. Young men are led astray—too optimistic, don't consider details. Besides, I was agent then, it was my duty to sell—to sell the land. Of course, I had to talk.

Walter.

And besides, see here—

(Walter goes over to the table and

*gets some of the placer sands left by
Murdock.)*

This is gold, gold from the bed of Clearwater Creek, on the Bryce claim, half a mile above my land. Murdock just brought it in. The chances are that the same deposit extends onto my land.

Peter.

(Eagerly)—Gold! By heaven, gold!

Walter.

A few acres along this creek may be worth millions! millions! First my father, until he died, and then myself, have nursed along this investment for years; every cent we could scrape together has gone into it. Altogether, including interest, we have paid one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars so far, and I want an extension of a few months' time on the two remaining notes until this fake law suit is settled.

Peter.

Moonshine! Dreams! Foolishness! I can't do it, my boy, can't do it. Business is business. I need the money, and you must pay. The notes fall due on November 17th, and you must pay.

Walter.

(With determination)—Then I will pay. I will go to Baltimore and raise the money some way and pay you. I'll organize a corporation and we'll see who wins in the end. I have six weeks' time. A lot can be done in six weeks.

Peter.

(Crestfallen)—Very well, very well, very well, pay up, that's all. That is (ahem) if you can sell or borrow on a title that is in dispute.

Walter.

(Angrily)—That's where the fraud comes in!

Peter.

Foolish talk—it's just business, just business. Well, no hard feelings, my boy—good-bye—I am off for home again tonight. (Feeling the seat of his trousers). O, that ride back to the railroad! (Whew!)

(Walks out stiff and limping, accompanied by the Indian.)

Walter.

(Reflectively)—This is Wednesday—Wednesday—I'll go to Baltimore by the middle of next week, then we'll see, Mr. Peter Hutchins, who'll come out ahead! In the meantime, Murdock will have a chance to explore some more on Clearwater Creek. If we can only find gold on my land it will help immensely!

Home! Home! Dear old home! And there I will see Nellie! Little Nellie Bostwick! It is four years now since we last met. How beautiful she was, how fresh and sweet at seventeen. And now she is 21 years old—from a girl to a budding woman!

(Unlocks his trunk and takes out a photograph of Nellie, gazes at it, and then puts it on the dresser.)

What a thrill comes unbidden at the thought of seeing her again. I could not call her my sweetheart—no, nothing like so near as that—just a vague, indefinite hope, too uncertain to receive a name; like the instinct of birds, calling—calling—for a mate. Perhaps it is more the gladness of returning home than any deeper claim.

(The sound is heard of a galloping horse approaching; horse stops.)

I wonder who that can be. By Jove! I know.

(Enter Mollie Weymes, a bunch of flowers pinned on her breast.)

Mollie.

Walter!

Walter.

(Shaking her cordially by both hands)—I knew it
Was you.

Mollie.

Why, did you hear my pony?

Walter.

And by another means, too;
You charge the very ether in advance!

Mollie.

O! I am so happy!
Dear Pontiac was madly wild to go,
And so I gave the little brute loose rein,—
We bounced like coils of springs, so light and easy,
Skimming along, as free as a bird on wings!
O! I could almost fly myself today;
It's glorious just to be alive!

Walter.

Which way did you come?

Mollie.

Over the mountain trail, then on the path
That curves around the northern shore of the lake;
Across the poppy field, then by the road
That winds meandering through the moss grown
woods;
And all of nature shouting with peals of joy
As through a thousand trumpets!

Walter.

The mountain peak commands a panorama
Unexcelled in all the world!

Mollie.

I saw an eagle poised in lofty flight,
And almost sailed away into the sky
Myself.

Walter.

Would you do that and leave me all alone,
Deserted by my chum, the happy valley
Happy no more, with my companion gone?

Mollie.

No, not for all the wide and wealthy world!
I was but jesting of my bouyant mood.
Come smell my posies, picked in the flowering meadow.
The droning bees were gloating on their petals,
And sipping out their honeyed sweets. Is this
A lazy day, all drowsy with the balm,
Or thrilling with the stir of active life?

Walter.

I thought you knew: you said that all was glowing.

Mollie.

It is, but in such different ways.
I chased a fox, the slyest little vixen,
Just keeping out of reach, and knowing well
I wouldn't harm a hair upon her tail;
Then came to the shelving brink of the shining lake;
Dismounted there, and let the pony graze;
And while the waves were lapping on the beach,
I lolled against the leaning trunk of a tree,
And whether it was the rhythm of the ripples,
Murmuring with a soft and gentle cadence,
I know not; but tears, unsought, came gushing forth,
A briny river down my sunburned cheek;—
A sweet, sad glow of strangest melancholy
Welling up in pathos from my heart;
Nor could I tell whether my fount of joy
Was simply brimming over to repletion,
Or if there was something missing after all,
Whose cruel absence made me really sad.
So Pontiac and I came swiftly here,
Coursing through the dreamy woodland shade,

That echoed with the cheerful notes of birds :
And now I wonder at the thought of tears,
For truly the sea of sunshine, bathing the world,
Is not more fraught with light than my own heart
Is radiant with the joy of living !

Walter.

Mollie, tell me this,—

Why did you ever come out here to live?

It is a query that often puzzles me.

(Mollie drops in a seat as if shocked.)

Walter sits down beside her.)

Mollie.

Smell my flowers. Here, I'll give you one.

(She gives him a flower.)

No,—put it in your buttonhole.

Let me do it. *(Puts it on him.)* Now you are
decorated.

Walter.

By an exquisite queen !

Mollie.

Why don't you go out to shoot?

A mighty Nimrod living by his gun !

Walter.

Look around,

And you will see the trophies of the chase.

But why did you come to the wilds so far,

To live alone in your cute bungalow,

Ten miles from here, instead of in some city?

Mollie.

City! City! I detest cities !

Walter.

But in society, among your fellow creatures.

Mollie.

Society! I hate it, with its rules!
Give me the wild, untrammelled, open life,
As free as air and in the heart of nature,
Whose beauty charms, and crushing might commands;
Who plants the dew drop in the blossom's bowl,
And drives the lightning home with deadly stroke;
Who spreads sweet perfumes in the country air,
And rends the earth with awful earthquake shock;
A force we ought to love and yet obey.

Walter.

But tell me, now; are we not chums and friends;
The very best of friends, you and I?
Removed far from the din of bustling towns,
In solitude, unspoiled by man, and where
The voice of the wilderness alone is heard,
One real good comrade fills the world with light!
Have we not grown most near to one another?
And yet there's such a host of things unsaid;
So tell me now, dear Mollie, heart to heart—
Why did you come out here so far away
From your true place, as best befits your culture?

Mollie.

The story of my life?

Walter.

Yes.

Mollie.

You ought to be testing minerals. (Rising).
Come, let me see you work the flaming blow-pipe;
And I'll sit by just like your little sister.

Walter.

(Pulling her back by the hand to her seat again.)
It is too late for that. My work is done.

Mollie.

The story of my life?

Walter.

Yes.

Mollie.

You know that I am married.

Walter.

Yes, I know that.

Mollie.

Isn't that enough?

Walter.

No, tell me all, so I may understand.

Mollie.

'Most every night a wild cat prowls about,
In high tree tops, around my bungalow,
And whimpers in the darkness like a child,—
Whether in subtle sympathy for me,
Or stirred by hunger's rage, I can not tell;
But deep down in my heart, the call o' the wild
Repeats its echo. The animals know me well.
Even whining puppy dogs that lick your face,
Or cunning little whelps of mountain lions,
Arouse within deep chords of tenderness;
So dear to me is helpless babyhood!

Walter.

That isn't what I asked about at all;
That isn't the story of your life!

Mollie.

Well, sir,—if needs be, must.
You know that I was born in Philadelphia?

Walter.

Yes.

Mollie.

My father was a wealthy banker.
When I got through the course at Vassar College,

I came back home, a young and blooming Miss,
All bubbling over with the force of life,
And loving no one but my dear old dad,
My over-idolized and only parent.

Walter.

And he loved you as much as you loved him?

Mollie.

Not less, but maybe more. My dear old dad!
Well, in the strange misguidance of his age,
What must he do, to better my estate,
But get me tightly anchored, as he thought,
Within the bounds of matrimony's port,
Secure for life in care of an honest man!
And I, misled by youthful piety,
Fell victim to the terrible mistake
Of misplaced duty and obedience!

Walter.

That must have been long, long ago!

Mollie.

Smarty! You are as wilful as I am!
But what misfortune stamps our semi-virtues!
You know me, Walter, and what I am like.
Think, then, a moment of Sylvester Weymes,—
A thorough bourgeois tradesman, rich and clean,
A man of honor, yet a live machine,
Adjusted as with springs, and cogs and wheels;
Each day its predecessor's counterpart,
As much alike as buttons on a vest;—
Arising on the very stroke of time,
Then every minute foreordained for use,
The very second set for each event,
All life, with pitiless exactitude,
Reduced to rules, as cold and hard as steel,—
A mere routine established by tradition!

Walter.

You said he came from Philadelphia?

Mollie.

Be careful what you say, for so do I!
No one can say that I am like a Quaker!

Walter.

He ought to have employed a house-keeper,
Instead of marrying you.

Mollie.

Me, the happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care,
Fire-brand of a girl; ablaze with more impulses
In a minute's time, than he in his whole life;
Full steam ahead in heedless acts and deeds,
A very mad-cap, if there ever was one!

Walter.

You must have fretted like a captured eagle
Confined within a hen coop's narrow walls!

Mollie.

Indeed, if I raised my wings they hit the bars!
Such small, hair-splitting pettiness of mind,
He always right, puffed up with gross conceit,
And I, an erring child, but to be led,
Restricted and suppressed! Such petty ways
Must goad to desperation in the end!

Walter.

No wonder you could not endure the strain;
A lioness is not a goat!

Mollie.

And then he grew to fat and ponderous size,
His labored breath performed with puff and wheeze,
The cold and clammy damp of perspiration,
Like beads upon his flabby hands, and forehead;
Popped eyes, and bloated cheeks,—oh! what a man!
Yet claiming me by right of legal bonds!

Bah! The loathsome thought gives me a turn,
As if a toad were crawling down my neck!
It takes much more than law to make a wife!
Ugh! Such was my lord, Sylvester Weymes:
And when I left him, bound in terms of law,
In soul, as far apart as distant poles,
Your pretty women of the social whirl,
With powdered cheeks and dainty, mincing ways,
Your callow youths and stilted married men,
Proclaimed me abroad a wild, recalcitrant wife,
Deserting woman, lawless runaway,
To leave this model man of civic worth;
For that he always was, I must admit,
In his bull-headed, overbearing way!

Walter.

And so you broke your galling chains,—
Escaped from gloomy prison altogether?

Mollie.

What could I do? Remain a married wanton,
Vile abhorrence roaring from every vein;
Or seek my freedom?

Walter.

O, what a pity!

Mollie.

And so, I have tossed up society,
And here I am, back near sweet nature's heart,
The past wiped out, and I, again care-free,
Released from dire perdition in my escape!
That's why I'm here, and why I'm going to stay,—
The clear horizon swept of every cloud;
And I, infused with cheerful buoyancy,
Just like a maid back in her teens again.

Walter.

Poor girl! Oh, what a shame!
Your finest feelings crushed beneath the weight
Of such a heavy blow!

Mollie.

The wound is healed by nature's kindly salve.
Oft, when I wander in the silent fields
At dead of night, great troops of stars blaze forth,
The heavens spangled wher-e'r the eye can reach,—
Bright diamond solitaires against the sheen
Of gleaming myriads, that melt into the glow
Of filmy star-dust! Then, I behold the cosmos;
Commune in soul with the Infinite, over-awed!
A hundred million tiny lights above,
And yet a single one ten million fold
The magnitude of our enormous earth!
And they revolve in their celestial paths,
As aeons roll, in endless course of time,
Through hundreds, of thousands, of millions, of
billions of centuries!
O! God! The spirit of the boundless deep
Flows like a flood through my revering heart;
But civic institutions, made by man,
Are like the impress of a far-off dream,
Dimly recalled in mists of long ago!

Walter.

Well, then your weeping by the lake was not
Upon account of misery with your husband?

Mollie.

What, that! O, never! never! no, indeed!
He often made me fume with boiling rage,
Or curl my lip in bitter scorn, and sulk
Like a balky mule! But tears? For him? O, no!
It must have been a fairy elf, I think;
Some mischief-breeding, teasing, little sprite,
Commingling gladness with the sweetest sadness,—
Smiles mixed with tears! But that's all over now.
Heighho! I am so happy! happy! happy!

(She walks around the room, swinging her arms in a careless way. She stops in front of a deer head on the wall.)

Walter!

See here the head of the buck we hunted together.
Do you remember the day, and how we rode
For miles and miles?

Walter.

Yes; that's the very reason I had it stuffed.

Mollie.

The chase I worship, bounding over the earth,
As free as a hawk, exultant in pursuit;
But O! my heart gives way at killing time,
To see a harmless creature stricken down,
Its pleading eyes congealed in brutal death!

Walter.

But then your appetite returns in force
When the juicy meat is served upon the trencher.

Mollie.

Well, that's another thing, for if not fed,
Gaunt hunger gnaws with sharpened, wolfish fangs!
It's like the glamour of a dreamy song,
Revived from some quaint, old, forgotten book,
Out here, in this, the happiest, happiest, happiest
Valley in all the world!

*(She arrives at his dresser and sees
Nellie's photograph.)*

Walter! What's this! A woman! Who is it?
Who is it?

Walter.

O, that? Why,—ugh—that—is—Nellie,—Miss
Bostwick.

Mollie.

Nellie! Who is Nellie?

Walter.

An old-time neighbor of ours in Baltimore.
Our families lived next door. I remember well
When she was born.

Mollie.

And do you write to one another?

Walter.

O, no. I haven't seen or heard of her
For four long years.

Mollie.

How old is she?

Walter.

Some ten years younger than myself;
So she and Marjorie must be of equal age.
As girls they always played together.

Mollie.

Marjorie! Who is Marjorie?

Walter.

Another neighbor that lived near us--Marjorie Knollys.

Mollie.

And what is she like?

Walter.

The truest friend a man could ever have.
She always sees the higher side of things—
A trifle sober, perhaps, but sound in judgment;
While Nellie is gay, and fond of the glittering world,
And always talking or laughing, or telling a joke;
But Marjorie is quite sedate.

Mollie.

And of the two which one do you prefer?

Walter.

There is a force that draws—called magnetism;
Nellie is well equipped with that. And now
She has attained the pride of womanhood,
Yet is a bud, all fresh with glowing youth!

Mollie.

(Pleadingly)—But you don't love her, Walter;
Oh! tell me that you do not love her!

Walter.

The thought of meeting her again, stirs up
A nest of hopes I scarcely knew were there!
Nellie, the girl I saw grow up, a woman!

Mollie.

A dream, you mean, a mere ideal,—no more,—
It's all in you, not her,—misleading hopes!
A gilded picture in your mind, portrayed
With bright imagination's vivid hues,—
All this and that,—a hundred fancied things
No woman ever is! O, how I hate her!
Where did you get her photograph?

Walter.

Out of my trunk.
As I must go to Baltimore next week,
I thought I would—

Mollie.

To BALTIMORE! To BALTIMORE! You did
Not say to BALTIMORE! You are not going
To leave,—not going away?

Walter.

I must; for business reasons I must go.

Mollie.

Oh! now a green and venomous slug eats at
My heart, with icy, death-like sickness;
And if I do not suffocate with the pangs
That torture and oppress by inner soul,
I could do murder,—choke and scratch to death,
The little minx! Oh, how I loathe and hate her!
To Baltimore! You say you're going away;
And I thought that all would last forevermore
Without a change! How long will you be gone?

Walter.

I cannot say; I might not come back again.
The crisis is a serious one, and all
My fortune is at stake, so I must go
And try to organize a corporation,
Or lose all that I own in the world.

Mollie.

Going away!

Walter.

And so the thought of seeing Nellie again
Awakens dormant memories to life—

Mollie.

To meet the dole of disappointing fate!—
An idle figment of a bachelor's dream!
O, Walter, why does this come up just now
To spoil our happiness? How you have grown
Into my life, I did not realize!
But now this sudden notice of departure,
And then this girl—how in an instant's time
They change the world's aspect! This photograph
Reflects some false, distorted spell on you;
I'd like to tear it into bits!

(*She starts to tear the photograph.*)

Walter.

(Hastily)—But stop! You shan't do that! Give it to me!

(He tries to get it. Mollie holds it behind her back.)

Mollie.

Then take it, if you want it so much!

(She shifts it from one hand to the other as he reaches for it. She drops it on the floor. He picks it up and puts it back on his dresser. The rays of the setting sun are shining through the door from the left.)

Mollie.

I hope you will not go, but if you do,
When will it be?

Walter.

In just about one week.

Mollie.

And in the span of that short little week,
Do you intend to show a miser's greed
And hoard your presence up—a boon too rich
To share with me? It is your turn to call.
I must be going now. It's getting late.
I have ten miles to ride and all alone.
The sun is sinking and will soon be down.
And yet there is a fine bright moon tonight.
Don't you enjoy a horseback ride at night,
Beneath the silver rays of the shining moon?

Walter.

Sometimes.

Mollie.

And would you now, tonight, with me,—
Down the weeping glade,
Where rabbits scatter as we come,

And mournful whip-poor-wills
Cry out their plaintive, homesick wail;
Over the rustic bridge,
That neatly spans the rippling brook,
Where horses' hoofs resound,
And clatter across in gleeful tune:
On, past the placid lake,
That shines so bright in shades of night,
Where weirdly calling loons
Breathe wild enchantment on the air;
Then through the bosky dell,
All sheltered in on every side,
Its soft, mild lights agleam
Like blushes on a virgin's breast:
At last arriving home,—
My own dear little bungalow,
So cosy and so sweet,
Its welcoming doors thrown open wide
To greet the honored guest
Who graces its enfolding walls;
Would you?

Walter.

(Shaking his head)—I couldn't,—I couldn't.

*(Mollie gets her hat, gloves and quirt
off the bed; glances through the door
at the setting sun, the glow of which
is streaming in.)*

Mollie.

The sun is richest, nearest to the earth.
Its golden fire, emblazoned on the sky,
In flaming streams pours from the sinking orb!
Beneath its royal light at eventide,
In silent calm, when all the world is still,
Most urgent passions glow within the soul!
It is the hour of fancy and desire!
The man of earth is the one that truly lives,
And not the dreamer in the misty clouds!

(She puts her arms around him and kisses him full upon the lips.)

Walter, my heart! Good-bye.

(She slowly goes, stops at the door and throws him a kiss. Exit Mollie. The clatter of her horse's hoofs is heard receding in the distance. Walter goes over and picks up Nellie's photograph.)

Walter.

Dear Nell! O, what a tender hope springs up,
Unfolding with the sweetness of a rose,
Amid the thorns of the wilderness!

CURTAIN.

Second Act.

Time: One month later.

Place: Reception room in Mrs. Bostwick's house in Baltimore.

Mrs. Bostwick and Willie Stokes are standing and talking. She is dressed for an afternoon reception, and is drawing on her gloves. Her costume is very elegant, of the latest style, and Stokes is dressed in frock coat, demi vest, spats, and has silk hat and cane in his hand. He is a great dandy.

Mrs. Bostwick.

Why don't you ask Willard Foss to your box party?

Willie.

O, goodness! Nobody knows him. I couldn't think of it.

Mrs. Bostwick.

But he was invited to the Melton's ball.

Willie.

The Melton's! You don't say?

Mrs. Bostwick.

Yes, and to the Cates-Appleby wedding breakfast; and to Flossie Beecham's reception.

Willie.

Goodness gracious! But no one ever heard of him before. He was selling insurance when I went abroad.

Mrs. Bostwick.

His uncle died in England, and they say he inherits a large estate.

Willie.

By Jove! I must put him up at the club. Deuced nice fellow, you know. I always liked him. Of course, I shall ask him—charming fellow!

Mrs. Bostwick.

Mildred Bunker brought seven trunks of gowns from Paris.

Willie.

O, dear, I wish I could see them.

Mrs. Bostwick.

Marjorie Knollys is spending the day with us. She is Nellie's dearest friend. Her father died three years ago. She is an orphan.

Willie.

Clevah woman!

Mrs. Bostwick.

She is the very pink of matrimonial opportunity, of the highest station, young, beautiful, wealthy, and wouldn't even encumber her husband with a mother-in-law. I should think some young bachelors I know would—hmmmm—bestir themselves.

(Willie struts back and forth, greatly pleased with his own personal charms.)

Willie.

Ha! Ha! Clevah, very clevah!

Mrs. Bostwick.

Mrs. Fontleroy has issued cards for the same evening I am giving my cotillion.

Willie.

But I am not going to hers; I am coming to yours.

Mrs. Bostwick

(Sarcastically)—Then it will be a success, I am sure!

Willie.

Clevah, by Jove! I say, I didn't mean that, you know.

Mrs. Bostwick.

No; you didn't see it in time.

Willie.

I say!

(Enter Hector Cloman and Nellie, clothed in automobile garments.)

Nellie.

Mother, dear, have we kept you waiting?

Mrs. Bostwick.

Mr. Stokes has been entertaining me.

Willie.

Very delighted, I am sure.

Nellie.

We have been all around the park. It is grand, mother; the air is so fresh, and it is the dearest machine. You musn't be late, mother. Give my love to Mrs. Meeker and everybody, and tell her I am sorry I couldn't come.

(Nellie steps to one side to remove her wraps, and is joined by Willie Stokes, who assists her.)

Mrs. Bostwick

(To Hector)—It is awfully good of you to take us to the reception. I am afraid we are imposing upon you dreadfully.

Hector Cloman.

Not in the least. On the contrary, it is a pleasure.

Mrs. Bostwick.

You always manage everything so well. What a masterful financier you are, organizing corporations, running your big shops and bossing so many men. You are a giant of executive ability. Is there anything you ever wanted that you did not get?

Hector Cloman.

There is something that I want now.

Mrs. Bostwick.

Indeed?

Hector Cloman.

Yes—a wife.

Mrs. Bostwick.

A wife? Most men do. Do you think there is any girl that would not be gratified at such a prospect?

Hector Cloman.

You have a very charming daughter.

Mrs. Bostwick.

There is no doubt of that. Nellie is a dear. I am glad you think so.

Hector Cloman.

I do indeed. And you approve of it?

Mrs. Bostwick.

Most heartily. Who wouldn't?

(Stokes joins them.)

Willie.

I say, old man, it is awfully good of you to take us to the reception, you know.

Hector Cloman.

Not at all; you are very welcome.

Nellie.

Don't be late, mother.

Mrs. Bostwick.

I won't. We are going now. Nellie! Nellie! come and kiss your mother. (Kissing her tenderly and looking at her with pride.) My daughter!

Nellie.

Why, mother!

*(Exit Mrs. Bostwick and Hector.)
(At the door Stokes makes a very ceremonious bow to Nellie.)*

Willie.

Au revoir, mademoiselle!

Nellie.

Au revoir, Mr. Stokes.

(Exit Willie Stokes.)

Nellie.

I do love a machine! Mr. Cloman is awfully kind to take us out so often. He says he is going to tour all over Europe next summer, and wishes we could go along. Wouldn't it be fun? But I suppose it wouldn't be proper. Well, mother ought to know. He is awfully nice.

(Enter James, the butler, with a card, which he gives to Nellie.)

Nellie.

Mr. Vernon! Show him in, James.

(Enter Walter Vernon.)

Mr. Vernon! I am so glad to see you. (Cordially shaking hands.)

Walter.

Nellie! I always start to call you Miss Bostwick, you look so much a queen; then your glad smile and gentle eyes make you Nellie again.

Nellie.

That would be very wicked. I am Nellie to you always.

Walter.

Then why don't you call me Walter?

Nellie.

That is different. You are a man, and—

Walter.

And? Why shouldn't you?

Nellie.

I have always looked up to you so, it doesn't seem just right.

Walter.

Am I so much older?

Nellie.

O, no, not that. I respect you so highly it seems just a trifle too familiar.

Walter.

Not if you realized how deeply I would cherish that familiarity. You see, I have thought of you so constantly, there is a tenderness, like the perfume of a flower, almost an intoxication. It exhales from one's sweetheart alone.

Nellie.

O, Mr. Vernon!

Walter.

Mister?

Nellie.

Well, Walter, then. It is the first time I have ever called you so.

Walter.

Not the last I hope, but rather like the first tip of the dawning sun as it rises, with the glory of day to follow.

Nellie

(Sitting down)—Come and sit down and talk to me—Walter—I like to call you that.

Walter.

(Sitting down beside her)—Your presence is like a mountain peak, giving the long view, and showing what seemed insurmountable obstacles but as hillocks on the plain. What really counts is ourselves, and what we think and feel.

Nellie.

You think a great deal, don't you, and feel very deeply?

Walter.

Too deeply, perhaps, and yet not so, since my thoughts, like the roads to Rome, all lead to admiration of your womanhood!

Nellie.

O, Mr. Vernon! You must get quite romantic out in your beautiful valley.

Walter.

Yes, dreaming of things that are not there; especially on moonlight nights in the spring. There is a *dolce-far-niente* that goes to the heart, with the frogs crooning and crooning like jolly companions down in the pool.

Nellie.

Wasn't it dreadfully lonesome?

Walter.

Yes, but spontaneous fantasies would rise of home and happiness, with the glaring day world gone to sleep and the filmy night realm, with its queer host of creatures, come to life—hoot owls, panthers, bats and mice.

Nellie.

And then you would grow hungry for companionship?

Walter.

For more than that. The music of the wilderness, so weird and eerie, was a dulcet song of love to me. Do you blame me, then, Nellie, for telling you that I love you?

Nellie.

Blame you? How could I? It shall be the pride of my life.

Walter.

You see, my material prospects are not very bright; but still, I am a mining engineer, whatever else befalls. In the United States there is a well bred class of people living on slender means, but cultured in heart and mind. From the standpoint of social pomp they are of slight account; but living by their own standards they are happy, perhaps the happiest of all. Would you be contented in that class?

Nellie.

You overestimate me in some ways, Walter; not as to breeding, I hope; but I love fine gowns and hats, balls, flowers, excitement, the crush of many people, to be admired and show exquisite taste in everything, to **have a butler and liveried servants, to travel and all that**; not because it costs money, nor as a standard to judge my friends by, but because I am at least half a worldling. Monotony would bore me to death. I love society.

(Enter Marjorie Knollys in handsome tailor made gown and hat, dressed for the street.)

Marjorie.

Nellie, Mrs. Exton wants—Why, Mr. Vernon, I didn't know you were here.

Walter.

(Rising and shaking hands)—How do you do, Marjorie?

Marjorie.

(Very sweetly)—I am AWFULLY glad to see you.

Nellie

(Rather tartly)—Please don't forget your message, Marjorie.

Marjorie.

I won't dear. Mrs. Exton is ready to try on your gown, and is waiting.

Nellie

(With a toss of her head)—O, well, then, if you will BOTH excuse me I will go.

(Exit Nellie.)

Marjorie.

It is quite like old times to have you back again. You are a deserter to have staid away for so many long years.

Walter.

They were long enough, beyond doubt.

Marjorie.

Do you remember the horseback rides we used to take together, when I was a girl?

Walter.

Indeed I do; they were happy times.

Marjorie.

And the day old Jack ran away, with the bit in his teeth, and you sprang from your horse at full gallop and caught him by the reins at the peril of your life, and saved me from being maimed or killed—and your arm was broken?

Walter.

He was a bad horse.

Marjorie.

I owe my life to you.

Walter.

I could not afford to lose such a true friend, for where could I find such another? Are you going out?

Marjorie.

I am waiting for Mr. MacGeoghegan. He will be here in a few minutes. He is always punctual. We are going to the lawyers on business.

Walter.

Are you a Hetty Green?

Marjorie.

Not at all. But orphans are trained in the practical school of necessity, and learn early that, not guiding the stream of events, we are carried out to sea. You must be glad to get back among people again.

Walter.

Isolation is a monster. It rusts the delicate machinery of the mind like hinges on a door, all gummed and clogged up with the rubbish of inaction.

Marjorie.

Are you fond of society?

Walter.

In a sense. But I feel like an interloper in the constant push to gain some petty advantage, to outvie and outshine. Good breeding should supersede contention in high life.

Marjorie.

You are too old fashioned. You haven't caught the money craze yet.

Walter.

I couldn't very well, with my nose always at the grind stone.

Marjorie.

I hear you have had very hard luck.

Walter.

For years I have scarcely called a penny mine, always scraping and saving to feed the omniverous maw of insatiable debt—debt that hangs like a gloomy cloud in the sky. It is cruel to see the best of life slipping rapidly by.

Marjorie.

What do you call the best of life?

Walter.

Home, for one thing; the sanctuary of the heart, most sacred of all things on earth; then some active occupation. Life is like a mighty engine, meant to pull loads, not to rust in the shop. Manhood exults in the arena of action, and ambition, impelled by worth and merit, longs to unsheath its powers.

Marjorie.

Love, manhood, ambition, all in mercenary bondage: it is a shame! This big forest domain which your father bought should make you a prince! You have told me how that horrid man has been trying to de-

fraud you out of it, and how hard to raise the money to beat him off. But why do you go to strangers in your peril, instead of to your friends. Why don't you trust them just a little more?

Walter.

But I have not found any to help me. With the most legitimate proposition, they turn me down as if I were offering a gold brick.

Marjorie.

Financiers are as cold as ice. You say the best of life is slipping by. Will you let it slip? What do you care for most?

Walter.

Candidly? I am in love.

Marjorie

(Tenderly)—In love! Then you have at stake the throne, the crown, the sceptre of life, the purple and the rose-colored chamber all in one.

Walter.

Yes; I love Nellie.

Marjorie

(Crestfallen)—Nellie? Nellie? Strange! (A short pause.) I wish you the best of luck and happiness. You and I are friends, are we not? Dear, good friends forever?

Walter.

With all my heart.

Marjorie.

(Reaching him both hands)—You promise?

Walter.

Upon my honor, and deeply honored to pledge my honor in the cause.

Marjorie.

You trust me?

Walter.

Your poise of mind displays clear truth in every act, governed well in the straightest course to the soundest end. Most richly endowed am I to be your chosen friend.

Marjorie.

I think if you go to the library you will soon find Nellie there.

(Exit Walter. Marjorie stands in deep thought. In a few moments enter Donald MacGeoghegan in his overcoat, with his hat in his hand.)

Donald.

Miss Knollys, I have the cab ready.

Marjorie.

Mr. MacGeoghegan, I want you to make inquiries for me about Mr. Vernon's affairs, and how they stand.

Donald.

Surely, I can tell you all about that. It is common talk on the street. He has two notes to pay at the Safe Deposit and Trust Company, amounting to fifty thousand dollars, in less than two weeks—on the 17th of November. If not paid the mortgage will be foreclosed. As there is no equity of redemption in that state, it will be final.

Marjorie.

And he will be penniless?

Donald.

Absolutely.

Marjorie.

Well, the notes will be paid.

Donald.

Pardon me, I think not. It is virtually impossible.

Marjorie.

(Firmly)—I will pay them myself.

Donald

(In astonishment)—You?

Marjorie.

Yes; but Mr. Vernon must not know of it. My agent must go to the trustee and pay in his name, as if the money came from him, but not until, say the 15th. Give him every chance first to raise the money himself. It is rather a ticklish point of pride you see. If he can't—then I pay.

Donald

(In consternation)—But, my dear Miss Knollys—

Marjorie.

No buts, now, I pray you.

Donald.

Fifty thousand dollars! If he should—if he should—lose the law suit—

Marjorie.

It is my money, so don't worry. He is a friend of mine—

(A sudden light dawns on Donald. He throws up his hands and looks up as if in enforced resignation.)

Donald.

(Skeptically)—A friend!

Marjorie.

And I am going to help him out. But he must never know—(aside) until after he is married to Nellie. A friend and a friend's lover, a double service by a single stroke. Let's go.

(Exit Marjorie, Donald following, very crestfallen, in the rear.)

Donald.

(In a God-save-us attitude)—A friend!

(Exit Donald. Enter Nellie, followed by Walter.)

Walter.

My conscience is clear. It will be the beginning of a new era. Thenceforth my life, freed from the past, will belong to me, and what I can make of it. You are its inspiration, Nellie, and some way I shall succeed. Is it not even better to go forth, hand in hand, meeting the buffets of fortune as they come, with high resolve to reach a glorious end; a more womanly triumph for you to fire the heart and impel the whole machinery of the mind with objective purpose, jointly winning and owning what is won, than to start out all cloyed with a rich man's bounty? There is so much in resolve. Nothing is too good for you, and to get it for you is my most earnest wish. Give me the chance and let me show what I can do.

Nellie.

You are perfectly splendid, Walter. Indeed, I like you very, very much. Talk to me some more. I love to hear you talk.

(Enter Mrs. Bostwick and Willie Stokes, both chattering so that neither is understood. Willie is much flustered.)

Willie.

(Walking excitedly up and down)—I've been insulted!
I've been insulted!

Nellie.

Why, what is the matter?

Willie.

I've been insulted! I've been insulted!

Mrs. Bostwick.

Tell us all about it, Willie.

Willie.

I've been insulted! I've been insulted!

Nellie.

Tell us what is the matter. Who did it?

Willie.

I've been insulted! It was that Butler chap. He said I was a blooming ass!

Nellie.

O, how mean. How did it happen?

Mrs. Bostwick.

Tell how it happened, Willie.

Willie.

It was at the reception. I was talking to Miss Fentriss. I was telling all about my trip abroad. Then this Butler man came up and said, "May I show you the conservatory, Miss Fentriss?" And she said, "If Mr. Stokes will excuse me." "O, but," I said, "I'm not half through yet, I am not half through." And then he turned his back on me and took her arm under his and dragged her off. And I said, "Miss Fentriss,

I haven't told you half; wait a minute." She looked back over her shoulder and said, "You see, I am helpless." The great, big brute! He is quarter back on the football team, and as big as a gorilla. Of course, she could not help herself.

Walter.

And they left you standing there all alone, with no one to talk to?

Willie.

Yes, all alone, with no one to talk to. Then later I saw him in the reception room smoking a cigarette. He said, "Have a cigarette, Stokes?" I said, "Not from you; I only smoke with gentlemen!" He said, "You are a blooming ass!" He said "You are a blooming ass!"

Walter.

He dared to say that to you?

Willie.

Yes, to me! to me! And I said "I'll chastise you!" He said, "You are a mollicoddle!" And I would have punched him in the eye, and kicked him down the steps—but—but—I restrained myself.

Walter.

Good thing you did; you might have hurt him.

Willie.

I didn't want to then. Next time, I—I—won't be so magnanimous. I'll cut him on the street! When I see him coming I'll raise my head like this, and look ahead with a vacant stare and pass him by! I'll cut him dead!

Mrs. Bostwick, Nellie and Walter
(in chorus)

That's right; cut him dead!

Willie.

I will; I'll cut him dead! I won't speak to such a chap! He insulted me, and I'll cut him dead! I guess that will fix him!

Nellie

(Soothingly)—He was very rude.

Willie.

Yes, he was very rude. He's a brute! He's a cad!

Mrs. Bostwick.

There, there, Willie, don't worry any more.

Nellie.

I guess he was jealous. You know he is sweet on Miss Fentriss; some say they are engaged.

Willie.

That's it, ha! ha! He is jealous of me! Ha! ha! That's it; he is jealous!

Mrs. Bostwick.

Take him into the library, Nellie, and show him the pictures.

Nellie.

Yes, come with me, Mr. Stokes. We will look at the pictures together.

Willie.

I'll cut him dead! I'll cut him dead!

(Exeunt Nellie and Willie.)

Mrs. Bostwick.

Wasn't that a dreadful calamity?

Walter.

(Laughing heartily)—He'll get over it after a while.

Mrs. Bostwick.

O, no—you don't know Willie. He never forgets a grudge.

Walter.

How was the reception?

Mrs. Bostwick.

Very beautiful, indeed. Why don't you go out more?

Walter.

Some day I may, when I can afford it.

Mrs. Bostwick.

(Sitting down)—I never saw you look so much like your father, Walter.

Walter.

We are more alike in temperament than looks.

Mrs. Bostwick.

I remember him so well, and your mother, too.

Walter.

When we sold the old home, thank heaven it was demolished, its memories undesecrated. How I should hate to think of strangers living in mother's room. But you knew us all in the olden days. How natural, then, that I should love your daughter.

Mrs. Bostwick.

What!

Walter.

She is the finest girl in the world! There is none other like her.

Mrs. Bostwick.

(Rising hastily)—You silly boy! What do you mean?

Walter.

Nellie.

Mrs. Bostwick.

What about Nellie?

Walter.

I love her. I want her to be my wife. It is like an echo from the past and a dream of the future!

Mrs. Bostwick.

Nonsense! A dream, indeed! Foolish, foolish, foolish child. What are you talking about? You marry Nellie? How ridiculous!

Walter.

Ridiculous? Why shouldn't I?

Mrs. Bostwick.

How absurd a question! Why—why—in a few weeks you will be ruined, penniless! Why—it's—it's—absurd! You are walking in your sleep! Whatever put such a notion in your head?

Walter.

Nellie's beauty put it there, and in my heart, too. But I fail to see how it is absurd. We are of equal birth. I am a gentleman. Our families are on a par.

Mrs. Bostwick.

O, yes, as to that. But you can't take care of her. Why, it is perfectly, supremely ridiculous! It is the most foolish thing I ever heard!

Walter.

(Offended)—I don't understand you, Mrs. Bostwick. You have always pretended to be a friend. I thought you liked me.

Mrs. Bostwick.

That is different. You are a nice fellow, Walter. I do like you—or have to this minute. I am perfectly willing to be a mother to you, but not a mother-in-law. Such a freak notion!

Walter.

Nellie does not think so—I do not think so—

Mrs. Bostwick.

Has it gone as far as that? Have you spoken?

Walter.

Yes; and it will go farther, if I can make it. Nellie likes me. She says so.

Mrs. Bostwick.

Well, I don't, and I will never consent. It is not you that I object to, but your condition. What have you ever done to warrant such a pretention? What results can you show in the world? Nothing! Nothing!

Walter.

An inheritance of family debts, mountain high, has kept me down; and now, in addition, I am fighting a serious attempt at fraud. When it is all over, win or lose, my life for the first time will belong to myself; and I will achieve success. I haven't had the chance before.

Mrs. Bostwick.

Stupid! Do you think my daughter is going to wait for you to make a fortune, or marry you without one? What are your chances? One in a million! If you had ability there would already be results! Results! O, you are good, and honest, and gentle, but I want more than that. Shall my daughter go to live in some little, old, dingy house, become a drudge, nurse her

own babies, cook your meals or have one or two servants to help? Help! A semi-menial herself! Well, I should think not! You should have better sense!

Walter.

She has a right to do her own choosing.

Mrs. Bostwick.

And I will see that she chooses right. After twenty-one years of care is her mother not to be considered? Here in Baltimore you will see old families, once social leaders, now living in grinding poverty, shabbily clad, hampered by tradition and untrained for business, steeped in the apathy of a hopeless fate—decayed gentility! God forbid! It is horrible! In contrast with the opulence of modern life how ugly and contemptible that meagre state appears! It makes me shudder! None of it for me or my daughter. Wretched incompetence! Never!

Walter.

You would force your daughter to marry against her will?

Mrs. Bostwick.

Not at all; but use a mother's power to guide her will in the right direction. We must be on top.

Walter.

But I am willing to work, to undertake anything.

Mrs. Bostwick.

It isn't in you. You are a dreamer. You think too much and act too little. You don't grasp the world of realities. Other men have succeeded, why haven't you? It is no answer that you have not had the chance. Let us judge by success and that alone. True, you don't lie, or cheat, or condescend to meanness. You treat others as gentle-bred when, nine

cases out of ten, they are not, which is stupid. You wouldn't hurt a fly unnecessarily. You would risk your life to save a baby, sacrifice happiness for principle, or march to death for duty; but all of that is not what counts. You haven't the self-assertive temperament which dominates. You don't push in ahead of others and grab all you want and more too, and let others fail and bear their losses. Magnanimity is no poor man's privilege. You can't save the land your father bought, much less make a fortune of your own. Go! Get rich! Prove that you can do it; then talk of Nellie, not before. But it isn't in you. You can't do it.

(Exit Mrs. Bostwick, much excited.)

Walter.

That is absolute stupidity! A dreamer because I think—instead of jabbering without doing so! Don't grasp the world of realities, because I am wrestling with the hand of fate! Success the only standard—fit for a pirate! Stupid it is, to treat others as gentle-bred, when they are not, and I plead guiltily to the count—a monstrous fault—but corrected with time and repentance! Don't push in ahead of others and grab all I want and more too—fiddlesticks!—mere petty competition among small minds. An idealist is not understood, that is all. It is deep thinking, steady force, good judgment, applied in big enterprises, that win success; not the flare and tooting of a pretentious manner that bids for every minute's notice.

(Walter walks slowly, thinking, over to the door and pauses.)

Give me the man of quiet mien,
Whose strength in great results is seen.

(Exit Walter.)

CURTAIN.

Third Act

Scene One

Scene: Walter's room in Baltimore, in Mrs. Cassidy's house. Time: One week later than before. The room is very bleak and cold looking. Walter enters, wearing a good overcoat. He looks pale, thin, solemn and crestfallen. Walter hangs up his hat and coat, sits in a chair, and falls into a brown study. He suddenly shivers from cold, blows on his hands, gets up, goes to a stove, shakes the ashes out, looks into the coal scuttle and finds it empty. Goes over and gets his overcoat and puts it on again.

Walter.

Even Nellie is more worldly than I thought. But no, she is true. Nellie is true. Yes, Nellie is true. But her mother is dead against me. If I could only save my lands! If I could only save my lands!

*(Drops into a chair, deeply thinking.
Enter Mrs. Cassidy and Mrs. Burke
in a belligerent attitude. They both
talk with a strong Hibernian accent.)*

Mrs. Cassidy.

Mister Vernon, we w'ud loike to be afther havin' a talk wid ye.

Mrs. Burke.

Yes, we w'ud.

Walter.

Well?

Mrs. Cassidy.

It is goin' on four weeks ye hav'nt paid the rint.

Mrs. Burke.

And ye owe me fer the washin' till I want to git paid.

Mrs. Cassidy.

An' me an' Mrs. Burke has talked it over in a conference loike, and we has come to the conclusion unanimous to demand our roights.

Mrs. Burke.

Which ye can't put us off anny longer, fer we want to git paid.

Mrs. Cassidy.

It's the mu'ny! the mu'ny!

Mrs. Burke.

And if ye haven't got it ye shu'd go to wurruk an' earn it.

Mrs. Cassidy.

Loike anny uther dacent man.

Mrs. Burke.

Me as has foive childer', an' me husband a droiver fer th' Adams Express Company, an' Pat says to me, that's me man, he says, "Jennie," says 'e, "Ye aint no beauty fer to make a owl bloind, an' yer stoyle aint loike a Diany," he says, "but ye'r as honest as the sunlight," he says, "ye'r as straight as a doi, an' Oi'm proud uv ye," an' Oi want me mu'ny fer the wash.

Mrs. Cassidy.

An' me fer th' rint. Wid th'ree childer' an' a widdy mesilf, me man bein' too, uv pneumonie a Saturda' night an' dead by Chuesda' an' Father Matthew prached the funeral oration, wid six carriages an' a hearse, an' Jim McCarthy said we had the foinest

wake he iver injoyed, me oldest bein' a girl goin' to school an' the baby that sweet, the darlint—an' if ye aint got the mu'ny ye shu'd go to wurruk.

Mrs. Burke.

Loike anny other dacent man and pay yer debts.

Mrs. Cassidy.

A livin' on crackers an' milk, loike a ghost ye'r so pale and thin, it's starvin' ye aire, an' dressed loike a dood, wid thim rich people, it's decavin' 'em ye aire, to make 'em think ye'r a gintleman, an' ye don't even pay yer rint an' yer wash. Shame on ye!

Mrs. Burke.

A foine koind uv a gintleman!

Mrs. Cassidy.

A dead bate, that's what ye aire!

Mrs. Burke.

A dead bate!

Walter.

Ladies, you do me injustice. A man may be caught in a pinch at times. But you shall be paid.

Mrs. Cassidy.

Ye've promised that before an' it isn't promises we wants but the mu'ny! the mu'ny!—dressed loike a dood as if ye cu'd buy out the town an' a part of the sthate.

Walter.

(Takes off his overcoat) Here take this, pawn it, pay yourselves and if there is any change bring it to me. You can do that kind of thing better than I can.

Mrs. Cassidy.

O, the foine gintleman! an' the beautiful coat!

Mrs. Burke.

That's what Oi call a rale gintleman! Handsome is as handsome does!

Mrs. Cassidy.

An' he called us ladies!

Mrs. Burke.

Yes, yer honor, an' good luck to yer honor.

Mrs. Cassidy.

An' may ye see betther days, poor man, and ye shall go out an' get a beefsteak an' pratties an' coffee if Oi have to pay fer it mesilf.

Mrs. Burke.

An' Oi'l pay half if it comes to that.

Mrs. Cassidy.

God bless yer honor an' good luck to ye.

(Exeunt Mrs. Cassidy and Mrs. Burke with the overcoat.)

Walter.

It was bound to come to that anyway; it might as well come now.

(Sinks in a chair, his head falls in his arms. Enter Peter Hutchins and Matthew Haley.)

Matthew Haley.

Is he sleeping?

Peter.

I guess not; he is just blue. (walks over and taps Walter on the arm) Hello Vernon, we would like to have a talk.

Walter.

(Looking up) You!

Peter.

You might ask us to have a seat. Well never mind, we came on business.

Walter.

(Rising) Pardon me gentlemen, you took me by surprise. Pray be seated.

(They all draw chairs up to the table and sit down.)

Peter.

Well, Vernon, this is Monday, the 15th of November. Have a cigar? Don't smoke? Haley?

(Haley takes one and they both light their cigars.) ;

And Wednesday is the 17th. You know what that means.

Walter.

Well enough; my notes fall due.

Peter.

Have you raised the money? Will you be ready to pay?

Walter.

I have not.

Peter.

Too bad, Vernon; that leaves you in bad shape.

Walter.

(Testily) Did you come here to tell me that?

Peter.

Keep cool, keep cool, my boy. You don't know your friends.

Walter.

Not if you are one of them.

Peter.

Tut, tut, tut, tut! See here, Vernon, you are not such a bad sort. I have come here to give you a chance.

Walter.

(Eagerly) A chance? You will extend the time?

Peter.

O, no, not that—that is impossible. But you can make ten thousand dollars. That will put you on your feet again. There is a big difference between ten thousand dollars and nothing. I have been strapped myself and know what it feels like.

Walter.

(Cautiously) What is your scheme?

Peter.

Commission! Commission! I will give you a chance to put through a deal and earn a commission.

Walter.

What deal?

Peter.

You know old James Bryce?

Walter.

Mr. Bryce? Why certainly; he is an old friend of my father's.

Peter.

Exactly. Well, when your father bought the hundred thousand acres, Bryce bought sixteen hundred acres adjoining.

Walter.

Yes, I know all about that.

Peter.

He is an old man now, over eighty.

Walter.

Yes, eighty-two or three.

Peter.

And not much on business, stupid, in his dotage.

Walter.

That is possible.

Peter.

I would like to buy that sixteen hundred acres.

Walter.

Why don't you go to see him yourself?

Peter.

Haley has been to see him. He is living out in the country, near the suburbs.

Haley.

He is too old to talk business. He says he doesn't know—he doesn't know—but, undoubtedly, if you will recommend him to sell, he will do it.

Peter.

He is just an old dotard and can't make up his own mind. He wants you to make it up for him.

Haley.

And he is coming here this afternoon to see you.

Peter.

See here, Vernon, I am giving you the chance of your life.

Walter.

Have you offered him any price?

Peter.

Yes, that is all fixed; there is nothing to argue on price. He just wants you to tell him to sell—to O. K. it, as it were. He is an old dotard.

Walter.

How much did you offer him?

Peter.

You know he paid two thousand dollars for it.

Walter.

Yes, I remember; but what have you offered him?

Peter.

Thirty-two thousand dollars.

Walter.

(Laughing heartily and rising from his chair) Thirty-two thousand dollars! That is utterly ridiculous! Why, it is a gold mine! That is where Murdock found the placer sands.

Peter.

But Bryce doesn't know anything about that. If we raise our price it would only make him suspicious and harder to deal with.

Walter.

By Jove! I have been so absorbed in my own affairs I never even thought to write or see him.

Peter.

So it just takes your O. K. to make a deal.

Walter.

(Angrily) That is an insult!

Peter.

Insult? To give you the chance of making ten thousand dollars in an afternoon?

Walter.

No! But to expect me to cheat my father's old friend, to betray his confidence!

Peter.

Cheat nothing. He is eighty-two or three years old, I tell you; he will be dead in a year or two and never know the difference. He couldn't spend that much money to save his life.

Walter.

That river bed may be worth millions! Clearwater Creek, I mean.

Peter.

Don't worry about that. It is the ten thousand dollars you are to think about.

Walter.

Ten thousand dollars be damned!

Peter.

(Ruffled) Vernon, don't be a fool, (rising) don't let your chance slip by.

Walter.

I'd rather be shot than do such a scurvy trick!

(Peter and Matthew Haley step aside and confer a few moments.)

Peter.

(Bluffingly) So! You are going to hold us up, heigh! Well, now see here, what's your price? What's your price?

Walter.

(Indignantly) I haven't any price, I'm not a Judas! If that old man comes here it will be with perfect trust in my integrity, because he knows he is weak, seeking protection in his age, to learn the truth with faith in my answers and confidence in my father's son.

Peter.

(Slyly) Aha, I see!

(Talks again with Haley.)

(Blandly) Say, Vernon, I didn't think you were such a hagler. I see! You want an extension of your notes, then your own lands will be saved. By gad! You have an eye to business! But our time is short. It is a hold up, but I'll do it. So there now; we have made our bargain. I will extend your notes and give you ten thousand dollars to boot. Gad! You are a squeezer.

Walter.

You villain!

Peter.

What, more? More? No, I wont, by thunder! You are a fool! If you don't put this deal through you are a beggar, stripped penniless, a mere stray dog in the street! Then there is Miss Bostwick. By gad, she is a queen!

Walter.

Don't mention her name. I wont stand for that.

Peter.

Vernon, you were never made to mix with the vulgar mass, scrimping and saving, twisting and squirming

to make ends meet. I know your kind—proud, high-strung, above the world's methods, yet crushed beneath its power! You ought to roll around in your own carriage, the master of high life, with the world at your feet, Walter Vernon, the gentleman, the aristocrat, sought after and honored, and Nellie Bostwick, his wife! By gad! That is a picture! Why you are born for it, as a duck for water, and it is money that makes the difference. Money! Money! Get it within the law, but get it,—how, makes but little difference, but get it! And see it grow, from a pile to a bigger pile! Bigger! Bigger! Bigger! Get rich! Rich! Rich! Men will sell their souls and women their bodies and their virtues for it. Money! Money! That's the thing!

Walter.

You are the most sordid wretch I have ever met in my life!

(A noise of someone talking outside is heard.)

Peter.

He is coming now. This is the show-down. (confidentially) Vernon, old man, I will tell you a secret. I have had my prospectors out there on that land for six weeks. It is a bonanza! It is worth eight or ten millions if a cent, and the Lord knows how much more. You hook this old fish and I'll give you one-fifth interest in the mine besides freeing your own lands from my mortgage. That is letting you in on a partnership basis. We three will all be rich! Rich! Be careful! He is a wily old fox. We can't get him without your assistance, that is why we have come to you; now be careful you don't spoil the game.

(Enter James Bryce, a very old man and feeble, but clear minded. Is dressed in old style southern gentleman's dress, broadcloth frock coat, fluffy shirt, slouch hat.)

James Bryce.

Howdy, Walter, howdy.

Walter.

Why Mr. Bryce, I am awfully glad to see you. How are you, sir? (They shake hands.)

Bryce.

Getting old, Walter—rheumatism in the back; but I don't give up. I am spry yet. You look like your father when he was a young man. A gentleman of the old school. A fine man your father was. He died at sixty-six. They all drop off one by one, all but me, and I will be going soon.

Walter.

I hope not for a long time; you look so well and strong. Wont you have a seat?

Bryce.

(Seating himself) O! O! It is rheumatism! These damp winds are awful.

Haley.

How are you, Mr. Bryce. You remember me? Mr. Haley—

Bryce.

(Defiantly) I remember you, sir—

Haley.

And Mr. Hutchins—we thought we would meet you here.

Bryce.

(To Walter) They keep pestering me about the timber

land out in the valley. I am too old to sell (to Haley) I don't trust you, sir. (to Walter) What could I do with the money? It is only for my grandchildren, not for me. There is William's son, Jimmy, named after me, and Mary's two children. If your father were here he would tell me what to do. A gentleman of the old school!

Peter.

The price we have offered is an inducement. We are buying for a large concern which will own all around your piece and that is why we want it. Thirty-two thousand dollars is a large price, more than it is worth.

Bryce.

Thirty-two thousand dollars! That is a big sum. What do you think of it, Walter? Thirty-two thousand dollars! It is wonderful! I bought it on your father's judgment. What could I do with the money if I sold?

Haley.

Buy sound municipal or railroad bonds—

Bryce.

(Testily) I am not asking you, sir! (to Walter) These commercial people—they don't understand.

Peter.

The land is not worth nearly that much—

Bryce.

(Suspiciously) How do I know but it is worth much more? I don't trust you, sir, either of you! I don't know you, sir!

Peter.

Mr. Vernon will tell you that fifteen dollars an acre is a full price for the best timber land. We are offering you twenty dollars.

Bryce.

Eh! Walter, is it true?

Walter.

That is a fact.

Peter.

You see, then, that thirty-two thousand dollars is very high.

Bryce.

It is a lot of money. It is a big stroke, Walter, a big stroke!

Peter.

Knowing that you were going back to the country we have had a contract drawn up—(taking a paper out of his pocket) so we could fix this deal up before you leave.

Bryce.

That is a big sum. It is all it is worth, eh! Walter? What shall I do—shall I take it?

Walter.

My advice would be to sell the timberland for thirty-two thousand dollars, but to reserve all mineral rights, or land where mineral is found.

Bryce.

Mineral? What mineral?

Walter.

Your land contains a gold mine, one of the richest in the country.

Bryce.

(Rising in great excitement) Gold mine! Gold mine! How is that, sir, you never said anything about a gold mine!

Peter.

It is a lie! There is no gold mine.

Haley.

(To Walter) You damn fool!

Bryce.

(To Walter) What is it about this gold mine?

Walter.

The bottom of Clearwater Creek that runs through your land is rich with placer sands, and must be worth some millions of dollars.

Bryce.

(To Peter) You robber! You liar! You scamp! How dare you—

Peter.

O, shut up, you old monkey!

Bryce.

How dare you—you—you—O-O—(to Haley) You thief! You scalawag! You are a brace of liars and knaves!

(Retreating towards the door and shaking his stick.)

Don't you ever bother me again! Don't you come near me! A gold mine! Worth millions! You scalawag! Robbers! Robbers! I won't sell to anybody! I won't sell! A gold mine! A gold mine!

(Exit James Bryce.)

Peter.

(To Walter, very vindictively) You fool! You double-cross traitor! You have betrayed us! I'll fix you for this!

Haley.

Why didn't you keep your damn mouth shut!

Peter.

You blithering idiot! I hope you'll starve in the street! You beast of a pauper! I'll give you mercy! I'll give you mercy! I'll grind you to dust! Wait till your notes fall due next Wednesday! After all I offered you—to make you rich, a partner—you double dyed Judas! O! such a fool! Such a bat-blind fool!

Walter.

If you say another word I will knock you down on the spot. Leave the room and go instantly. You are a couple of scurvy knaves!

Haley.

(Shaking his fist in Walter's face) You have spoiled the prettiest deal that ever was framed. We will make you smart for this!

Walter.

There is the door! Get out before I kick you out!

Peter.

If I don't crush the life out of you may I be stricken blind!

(Exeunt Peter and Haley in great rage, having picked up their coats and hats.)

Walter.

I would rather starve in the street than betray my father's old friend!

*(Drops in the chair at the table, looking very disconsolate.
Enter Mrs. Cassidy.)*

Mrs. Cassidy.

O, the beautiful coat! And here is the ticket. Oi have paid Mrs. Burke and mesilf, and there is two dollars and siventeen cints over (lays the money on the table) an' ye mus' brace up loike a man an' go out and get a beefsteak an' some pratties an' coffee; ye need it, pour soul! Is there anything else I can do fer ye?

Walter.

Nothing.

Mrs. Cassidy.

God bless yer honor!

(Exit Mrs. Cassidy.)

Walter.

(Looking at the money) Two dollars and seventeen cents! (a short pause) O, Nell!

(His head falls in his arms on the table. The wind and rumbling of an approaching storm are heard.)

Scene Two

Place; reception room in Mrs. Bostwick's house, same as in the second act.

Time: Evening of the same day as the preceding scene. Hector Cloman and Nellie Bostwick are at the window looking out. He has his arm around her waist, her head resting on his shoulder.

Nellie.

What a dreadful night it is. Do you suppose anybody is out in the storm?

Hector.

Not many, I guess.

Nellie.

What a shame! Our elm tree is split in two.

Hector.

Lucky the roof is not blown off.

Nellie.

We could repair that, but not the tree.

(The honk of an automobile is heard.)

Hector.

Hello, there is Geoffrey, I knew he would get here.

Nellie.

Hector, why do you leave in weather like this? Stay until it has all gone by.

Hector.

The storm is over. It is nothing but a drizzle now.

Nellie.

But why do you go, on the very day of our engagement? Why don't you stay with me?

Hector.

Why, Nell, I promised Michael Blaine to meet him at the club this evening. He is going to Pittsburg tonight on very important business and it really is necessary to see him.

Nellie.

But can't you see him some other time, or write?

Hector.

No. He is going West tonight.

Nellie.

(Holding up her left hand) Hector, your ring is simply beautiful. A perfect gem!

*(Throws her arms around his neck.
He kisses her.)*

I wish you would stay, dear.

(Hector goes over and taps a Japanese gong. Enter James, the butler.)

Hector.

My rain coat, James.

(Exit James.)

Nellie.

Will you come to dinner tomorrow night?

Hector.

Yes.

Nellie.

And stay all evening?

Hector.

Yes, indeed.

*(James returns with a large raincoat.
Helps Hector put it on. The coat envelopes him thoroughly. Exit James.)*

Good bye, Nell. Until tomorrow night.

Nellie.

Good bye, dear, I am so glad you have such a fine big coat. (with emotion) My darling! And will you telephone in the morning?

Hector.

Yes.

Nellie.

Good night, dear.

Hector.

Good night.

(Exit Hector. Nellie returns to the window. The honk of the automobile is heard growing fainter as it recedes.)

Nellie.

There he goes. (waves her hand) As if he could see me!

(She holds up her hand and admires her ring.)

Isn't it beautiful.

(Enter James with a tray and card which he gives to Nellie.)

James.

A lady called this afternoon when you were out and left her card.

Nellie.

Mrs. Walton! Who was with her?

James.

She was alone, Miss.

(Enter Mrs. Bostwick.)

Nellie.

I am glad she called. I must go to see her.

Mrs. Bostwick.

(Critically) James, your livery is getting positively shabby.

Nellie.

Why, mother, it is perfectly good.

Mrs. Bostwick.

Go to the tailor and order a new one and send me the bill. But the coat must be longer, with more braid and gold buttons. Bring me his cut of the latest style.

James.

Yes, Madam.

Mrs. Bostwick.

Who's card is that?

Nellie.

Mrs. Walton's.

Mrs. Bostwick.

H-m-m-m!

Nellie.

She called this afternoon when neither of us was in.

Mrs. Bostwick.

That's lucky. Strange such people call—quite impertinent. Well, it need go no further.

Nellie.

O, mother, she has been so nice to me. I like her.

Mrs. Bostwick.

She is too gushing entirely. They don't by any means belong to the upper set. Her husband makes buckets, I think, or something like that.

Nellie.

Why, your own father sold vinegar and pickles.

Mrs. Bostwick.

You heartless child! Never say that again. (with great gusto) I am descended from General Putnam on my mother's side! You guileless babe! Always say we are descended from General Putnam, and never mention my father again. Come, Nellie, the others are waiting for our game of bridge.

(Exit Mrs. Bostwick.)

Nellie.

I don't believe, just because I am going to marry rich, in deserting my old friends, and I won't either. It is the last thing in the world Hector would ask.

(Nellie drops in a chair deeply thinking. Enter James ushering in Walter. Exit James. Walter is wet with rain and pale with excitement.)

Walter.

Nell!

Nellie.

(Rising with a start) Walter! Where did you come from? Why, you are dripping wet! And you look so strange! What is it? What is the matter!

Walter.

(Very intense, but subdued, no ranting) Nellie! I want you to be my wife! A man can't live alone. I want my woman! It is not money and gowns that satisfy the heart, Nell. It is not pomp and vanity that make happiness; nor excitement and many people; but love, the home, the family! And it is not bricks and grounds that make home, Nell, but heart-union, the wife, the mother! I am a man, Nell, not rich, but I will work for you, Nellie, and we will prosper by degrees. I want my wife, my woman!

Nellie.

O, Walter! You must not speak like that. You do not know what you are doing. Why do you make me hurt you so? Can you not see?

(Showing him her left hand.)

Walter.

A ring! A diamond ring! What does it mean?

Nellie.

Can't you guess?

Walter.

Is it an engagement ring?

Nellie.

Yes.

Walter.

Engaged! Engaged! To whom?—Hector Cloman?

*(Nellie nods her head and chokes
down a sob.)*

Are—do you—are you sure you—love him?

Nellie.

Mr. Vernon! How can you ask? Of course I do!

Walter.

When did it happen?

Nellie.

Today.

Walter.

I—I—hope you will—be—happy—Nell—
very—very—happy! You have my blessing—
and my benediction! I hope you will be very—
very—happy!

*(Exit Walter in a dazed manner.
The sound of pouring rain is heard as
he goes out.)*

Nellie.

Walter—Walter—have you gone—
O, Walter! I am so sorry!

(Nellie weeps.)

CURTAIN.

Fourth Act.

Place: Walter's cabin in Green Moss Valley.

Time: The following June. Marjorie is sitting. Walter is lolling in a careless attitude.

Marjorie.

I wish you wouldn't be so apathetic.

You seem so listless and without a purpose.

Walter.

But what's the use, Marjorie?

What difference does it make?

Marjorie.

Success or failure!

The world is fair to those that take it fairly;

But if you mope and sulk the time away,

Of course it's gloomy to you.

Walter.

And do I mope and sulk the time away?

Marjorie.

You don't appear to care for anything,

And that's what worries me.

Walter.

What is there, anyway, to care about?

Marjorie.

The world, ambition, power, action, life!

To take your place along with other men;

Attain achievements worthy of yourself!

You could if you only would. Then why won't you?

Walter.

I've made a little journey in the world,
And candidly I am disgusted—tired—
Or what you will. It isn't worth the while.

Marjorie.

Oh! but it is;
If you would only see things as they are!
Though disillusionized, you should not quit.
The higher truths of life are still worth while,—
Yes, very much worth while.

Walter.

For instance, what?
To chase the scrawny phantom of mammon's greed,
And bask in vapid smiles of the snobbish world;
To be lionized if rich and snubbed if poor,
The fluctuations of success, each day,
Like a ledger, marking up my social rating?
Such base incentive does not stir my heart
One beat the faster. And as for womankind,—
I must not rail against your gentle sex—
That would, indeed, be very impolite;
But when the balance swings from love to gold,
Weighed up in an apothecary's scale,—
Or is the measure Troy? I forget which.

Marjorie.

Now, there you go, with your foolish cynicism!
Women are not entirely mercenary,
Nor is the world so awfully cold!
(*Enter Nellie. Walter rises.*)

Nellie.

These are the dearest skirts for walking! Marjorie, is
my hat on straight? We are going for a farewell
jaunt to Inspiration Point. I am almost sorry we are
leaving tomorrow.

Walter.

Almost sorry?

Nellie.

I mean, we are sorry, Walter, awfully sorry. We have enjoyed our two weeks' visit to Green Moss Valley immensely. But how can you stay here all alone? Won't you die of home-sickness?

Walter.

I have felt even more abandoned in the big cities.

Nellie.

Come and go back with us tomorrow. It is dreadful to remain here by yourself.

Walter.

There is a music in the wilderness which you city-bred people do not understand.

Nellie.

Hector! Come on.

Hector.

(Within.) I am coming, Nell.

(*Enter Hector.*)

Walter, if you could ship this atmosphere to Baltimore, your everlasting fortune would be made. It is almost impossible to get tired here. We are going out to Inspiration Point. Won't you come along?

Walter.

No, thanks. As you have only been married three months, a wide panorama will afford all the company you two will need.

Nellie.

Marjorie, you come.

Marjorie.

No, thank you, Nell—I won't be missed.

(Exeunt Hector and Nellie.)

Marjorie.

Women are not as heartless as you think;
You really ought to know that they are not.
If you would meet Anita Bolingbroke,
On her return from Europe very soon,
Your view of life would be entirely changed.

Walter.

Still harping on Anita! I almost know
Her now; you always talk of her so much.

Marjorie.

No one compares with beautiful Anita—
The peerless woman—matchless paragon!
Go back with us. She will stir your blood!
Life won't seem flat and stale when you know her;
But you will wish that you had ten fold strength.

Walter.

Marjorie, there are times when you infuse
A burst of light into the very air,
And all things seem entirely different;
And then these other thoughts come surging back,
Impelled with double force and vigor.

Marjorie.

You must not think forever of a loss,
But throw the memory off and so forget.

Walter.

It is not how you prize a woman's love,
And marshal all your manhood in her behalf,

Not fire of passion flaming in your soul,
Nor yet the predilection of her heart,
That guides decision to its final cast:
But a life of pleasure, with its golden lure,—
The giddy social whirl,—mundane success!
If not a money-maker, (which I am not),
I could not count for much in Nellie's eyes,
Nor in her cold and calculating mother's,
Nor in the circle's which they represent:
Quite welcome as a brother, or a son,
But God forbid the thought of closer union!
O, well, at least it is all over now.
My castles, built of sand, have crumbled flat!
And yet the desolation! Welcome the end;
That is, indeed, all that I ask, the end!

Marjorie.

What do you mean by saying the end?
You'd not rob nature of her final task!

Walter.

Not rob, oh, no—but lend a helping hand;—
And not by overt act, but by that wild
Imprudence which drags destruction in its wake;
To have done with heartache and the dismal blues,—
World-weariness,—a raft of petty ills;
To let the whole complex machinery
Dry up and blow away, swept back into
The pure, sweet elements from which it came;
A sorry pile of cracked and bleaching bones
Alone left over, blinking in the sun,
To tell the tale of the folly of being a man!

Marjorie.

Now, there, indeed, you spoke unworthily,
Your baser parts most falsely mounting up
By usurpation over your true self,

Which is but momentarily unthroned.
It's true that life is like a battle's strife;
But would you shift the burden of the fight,—
And you a Vernon of the knightly race?

Walter.

By heaven! I hadn't thought of that!

Marjorie.

Your ancestors were men of a hardy grip.
Through sliny moats, and up steep castled walls,
Crushed in defeat or crowned with victory,
They bravely fought their hard and sturdy way!
In wars, tournaments, courts and ladies' bowers,
With noble head erect and eye on fire,
They met their compeers in that fighting age;
Gave blow for blow and stroke for mighty stroke,
Met right with right, and love with tender love!
And what was the gist of all their chivalry?
The Will of Righteousness Unconquerable!
Yes, that was their ideal! No less to you,
It is your precious *Knightly Heritage*!
Will you discount the august dignity,
And cast it down, quite obsolete, outworn;
Too troublesome to take the irksome pains,
In these easy days, that shirk the higher task;
Or stand by the knightly standard of your blood?

Walter.

There is a strain in you that fires the heart,
And puts to shame my lack of interest!
I bare the head and bow the bended knee;
For your unspoiled, true-hearted womanhood
Shines through the dullness of my heavy moods,
Like light, translucent, through a murky bone;
And thus restores my firm resolve of mind!

Marjorie.

I'm glad, O, very glad, to hear it.

Walter.

I promise, I shall mope and sulk no more ;
But now will show what I can really do,
As when the lion, roused from evil dreams,
Yawns, stretches, shakes his tawny mane,
And forth to battle, proudly strides !

Marjorie.

There's nothing in the world could please me more !
I am delighted !

(Enter Clyde Murdock.)

Murdock.

Hullo, Walter. I come to see—. Howdy, Miss. I wish you a howdy-do.

Marjorie.

How do you do, Mr. Murdock. Did you come to talk business with Mr. Vernon ?

Murdock.

Yes. I come to tell him—

(He stops, lost in admiration of Marjorie.)

Marjorie.

Then if you will excuse me I will go and join Nellie and Mr. Cloman.

(Exit Marjorie.)

Murdock.

That's a hell of a fine gal. Is she the one that paid your morgige off ?

Walter.

Yes. She paid it and saved me from foreclosure, then I gave her a mortgage back.

Murdock.

Why don't you marry her?

Walter.

We are friends.

Murdock.

Hell! That's funny. Say, who do you think I seen comin' this way?

Walter.

Hard to guess.

Murdock.

That old bum, Peter Hutchins!

Walter.

Here!

Murdock.

Yes. I come to tell you. He'll be hyar in a minute.

Walter.

Now, by George, I am glad of that!

Murdock.

You gona tell him about Dink's evidence?

Walter.

Unequivocally.

Murdock.

How's that?

Walter.

Yes.

Murdock.

Say, you lemme tell him. I found it out. Won't you?

Walter.

Well, if you want to.

(Enter Peter Hutchins with Indian guide.)

Peter.

Well, Vernon, old man, how goes it?

Walter.

You are a good ways from home. What brought you here?

(Peter.)

Business, Walter, business.

Walter.

That is a foregone conclusion. But what business? To see me?

Peter.

To see my lands—to take possession. I have bought the title from William Jukes.

Walter.

What!

Peter.

I have bought from William Jukes. The lands are mine. I came to take possession.

Walter.

Now, by all that's holy!—

Murdock.

Hold on, Walter, let me tell this yere pirate—say, you know Patterson that runs the game? Well, I wus down at his joint three nights ago, and I seen a old miner, named Dinks, I ain't met sence twenty year back. He worked at Obadiah's Gulch in Californy in the early days, an' he knowed Mark Jukes, an' all them people. He says the woman, Wilhelmina, wus the wife of Harry McGraw—

Peter.

That's a lie!

Murdock.

*(Draws his gun and points at Peter.
The Indian Guide runs out of the
door.)*

Hell-fire! You take that word back, or you'll never speak another! Take it back!

Peter.

Hold on a minute—hold on—

Murdock.

Take it back, on your life!

Peter.

Well, you've got the drop on me—

Murdock.

Take it back!

Peter.

Well—it was an indiscretion.

Murdock.

Indi—indigestion! I don't give a damn about your indigestion! But you take that back, or by—

Peter.

Well, under the circumstances, I'll have to—under compulsion.

Murdock.

(Lowering his gun.) You'd better. That wus a close call fur you. As I wus sayin', this McGraw left his wife an' a kid one year old an' went to Mexico.

Walter.

It wasn't even Mark Jukes' kid—

Peter.

What kid are you talking about?

Murdock.

Say, you keep your mouth shet an' I'll tell ye. Wen McGraw went to Mexico, seein' 'as how his wife an' kid wus starvin', she took up with Mark Jukes.

Walter.

Although she was the wife of Harry McGraw.

Murdock.

Well, five year later, McGraw turns up one day, an' his wife gits skeered he's a gona kill her, so she quits Mark Jukes an' runs away to San Francisco. But Mark Jukes kep' the kid like as if it wus his own, an' ever'body called him Billy Jukes, but his real name is Billy McGraw—

Peter.

That's a l—

Murdock.

(Pointing gun.) Be keerful! Thar's a big stake on the turn o' that 'ar word!

Walter.

Soon after McGraw's wife ran away, Mark Jukes married Mary Scullin—

Murdock.

Wich the same become his widow wen Mark died.

Peter.

She did not. Wilhelmina was his widow.

Murdock.

That's whar you lie, damn your hide!

Peter.

This is barbarity!

Walter.

Mary Scullin was the only wife or widow Mark Jukes ever had, and as he died without other relatives, she became his sole heir. Through her I got my title, which is unassailable.

Murdock.

I've knowed Dinks fur twenty year, or more, an' we got his affidavy afore the Justice o' the Peace.

Walter.

So it comes to this—that you concocted a scheme to prove that Billy McGraw was the son of Mark Jukes and the heir to this property, and that Mary Scullin was only a bigamous wife, which is the same as no wife at all in law, relying on perjury to prove your case. I got the case continued last winter to gather evidence, and now we can prove your affidavits to be rank perjury. And I swear if you do not dismiss the case I will send you and Billy McGraw, and your other associates to States Prison where you belong.

Peter.

Why this is blackmail!

Walter.

Blackmail! You whelp! Your soul is so deep dyed in iniquity, you don't know turpitude from justice! You are the most depraved blackguard in seven states, you lying, fraud-making perjured villian!

Peter.

Say, see here, do you mean that?

Walter.

Do you see those wild animals on the wall? I shot all of them with that Winchester hanging there. If you ever dare put foot on my land again, come armed, for by God! I will shoot you at sight like a skunk! Now, go, and never let me see you again.

Peter.

Say, Vernon, this isn't business—

Walter.

(Pointing to the door.) Go!

Murdock.

Lemme show him how.

(Grabs Peter, drags him over to the door and kicks him out, Peter calling "hold on, hold on.")

Thar! I guess that'll hold him fur a while. Ha! Ha! Ha! Indigestion! He thought he could fool me by saying he had indigestion! Ha! Ha! Ha! I wish to hell he hadn't took it back.

Walter.

That's the last you will ever see or hear of Peter Hutchins!

Murdock.

Say, pard, I'm glad I come in yere. It's more fun 'n I've had in a month o' Sundays. Ha! Ha! Ha! Indigestion! Say, I'm a goin' over to tell Kitty Maloney. She'll laugh her sides out. Ha! Ha! Ha! So long, pard, Ha! Ha! Ha!

(Exit Murdock. Walter goes over to the work table.)

Walter.

So. She thinks I mope and sulk! Here are all these

samples Murdock has brought in, untouched. Well! Well! Mope and sulk! I will have to get to work as soon as they are gone, and do some assaying. Yes; I will wake up and go to work.

(Examines sample with a magnifying glass.)

This looks pretty good. Free milling quartz.

(A sound is heard in the distance of an approaching horse.)

Listen! I wonder! Mollie! As sure as you are born!

(He gazes at the door. The rays of the setting sun are streaming in. Enter Mollie Weymes.)

Mollie.

Why, Walter! Don't you know me?

You're standing there like a block of stone!

Walter.

(Shaking both her hands) Mollie! How very glad I am to see you!

Mollie.

I just heard yesterday that you were back. When did you come?

Walter.

Two weeks ago.

Mollie.

And you have been in Baltimore all winter?

Walter.

Yes.

Mollie.

And now you have returned out here to stay?

Walter.

Yes.

Mollie.

When are these other people going away?

Walter.

Tomorrow.

Mollie.

And then you will be all alone again?

Walter.

Yes.

Mollie.

I didn't intend to come this way today.

Walter.

Well, then, why did you do so?

Mollie.

I went out for a little ride last night,
And a wolf was howling at the clouded moon,—
A dismal note; and then another joined;
And others still, until their savage discords
Aroused the heavy echoes of the night!
And I rode on and on, through light and gloom,
With Pontiac all trembling in his skin,
Until I got to,—you know where the road
Turns sharp up on the hill?

Walter.

Yes.

Mollie.

And I looked down and saw your cabin here.

Walter.

Well?

Mollie.

A light was burning in your bedroom window.
It must have been near ten o'clock.

Walter.

I didn't retire till after that.

Mollie.

I looked, and looked again, and couldn't see you.

Walter.

Of course you couldn't, in the night?

Mollie.

And then I slowly rode back home again.

Walter.

And how about the wolves?

Mollie.

They followed, madly yelping, in the rear,
The dusky, snarling beasts, half-starved and fierce,
But yet not daring to come too close to us;
Their gleaming eye-balls shining in the dark!

Walter.

And Pontiac?

Mollie.

Was nearly scared to death, and then today—

Walter.

Today?

Mollie.

We cantered back. I saw your friends off there,
And straightway turned to go back home again,—
But before I realized the fact, I found
That I was coming here instead.

Walter.

Why didn't you come at first?

Mollie.

I didn't want to see them—but you.

Walter.

I'm awfully glad you came, at all events.

Mollie.

It seems as if it were but yesterday
That we were here together, you and I,
And all alone; my buoyant heart aglow,
Quite overflowing with its brimming joy,
To cast itself most humbly at your feet!
And then you went away, and I have starved
For your companionship without repose.
I've missed you—missed you sadly every day.

Walter.

And I rejoice at last at my return.
The rugged wilds contain a luring charm
That soothes and braces up the drooping nerves,
Imparting new and fresher views of life.

Mollie.

Are you not glad, then, to see me, too;
When I am happier, far, than words can tell,
To have you back again?

Walter.

Indeed, I am dear Mollie, beyond all measure!

Mollie.

Perhaps you lack the gayness of the town?

Walter.

Not a bit,—while you are here, at least.

Mollie.

It may be somewhat slow in many ways,
But still we have our hunts and beasts of prey;
And then the din and tumult of the storms
That break the back bone of monotony.
Don't you adore the riot in the air?
The thunder's sudden crash and noisy roar,
The lightning's brilliant flash, the shrieking wind,
The sheets of pouring rain in high deluge,—
And then the gleam, as if in benediction,
Of dazzling sunlight shining afterwards?
Oh! how I love the heart of God's dear world!

Walter.

I do, indeed I do. And, Oh, must not
The human soul have its wild passion's storms,
To make the coursing pulses throb and beat,
Awakened with the joyous thrill of life,—
And then the quiet afterglow of peace?

Mollie.

You see the colored rays of the setting sun;
They bear a golden light of mystery,
Reminding of the time before you left.
Do you recall the glamour of those days,
So fresh in mind, yet seeming long ago?

Walter.

I never shall be able to forget!
The soft enchantment of the dreamy spell
That you were wont to cast, returns anew,
Enkindling old-time smouldering flames to fire,—
Though smothered over, not entirely out!

Mollie.

(Sighing)—Oh, Walter!
I am so glad that you are back with me!

Walter.

It is the same bewitching hour of old!
Its deep infatuation's magic force
Wipes out the intervening slough of gloom,
And quite restores the old-time joy of living!

Mollie.

I am so glad the others will soon depart,
And leave us undisputed chums once more!
God be praised! We two alone again!
But speedy minutes are rolling swiftly by,
So I must now be up and off.
Dear heart! Until we meet again,—good-bye!

(She impulsively throws her arms around him and kisses him. Goes to the door and waves her hand. Exit Mollie. The clatter of her horse's hoofs is heard receding in the distance. Walter sinks half dazed upon a stool in the center of the stage and becomes lost in a dream of the imagination. The rays of the setting sun are shining in. Note the light grows darker and darker until very dim, the sun's rays being removed. Low music begins to vibrate, grows louder and louder, throbs and palpitates. Deep notes of the base violin, tooting of the oboe and clarionette, mingled with strains of the violin. Time is syncopated. The stage lantern throws a downward stream of sparks and tongues of flame which turn into a shower of roses. Then the stage is illuminated with gray light.)

THE FIVE SENSES.

Represented by five young girls artistically clad, partially concealing and partially revealing the beauties of the figure, now enter from different parts of the stage, collect and dance around him, first with slow swaying movements, afterwards faster and wilder in a dance representing the

RIOT OF THE SENSES.

As the dance proceeds, the spot light is focussed, and colors alternately change to orange, crimson, white, yellow, gray, etc. At the end of the dance they form a semi-circle back of him, and all recite in chorus, as follows:

"The Five Senses."

Behold! the Five Senses—each one a joint queen!
Our rule is a good one—the best ever seen;
For life universal, evolved from mere spawn,
Through steps of slow progress by us has been
drawn.

Our pains, all unaided, a work most sublime,
By long perseverance, raised man from the slime!
All laws that are human must change in the end,
But we, the staunch framework, withstand every bend.
(Each one now advances in turn and recites a little speech as follows, with changing lights.

"Sight."

(White spot light.)

By Sight, all brightness and beauty you see—
The day's great glory, unfolded by me!

"Sound."

(Violet spot light. She strikes a lute in her hand.)

I make the concord of music resound!
How gay the bouyant vibration of Sound!

“*Smell.*”

(Green spot light. She holds a bouquet to his nose.)

Inhale the perfume and fragrance of spring—
A joy Smell only is able to bring!

“*Taste.*”

(Orange spot light. She kneels, puts her arm around his neck, and kisses him.)

By Taste, two sweethearts in giving a kiss,
Attain the purest enjoyment of bliss!

“*Touch.*”

(Crimson spot light. She kneels, with her arm around him.)

The Touch of lovers' caresses excites
The most exquisite of human delights!

(They now lasso him with garlands of flowers, walking around him from left to right.)

“*The Five Senses.*”

And now we are planning to start you anew,
Enthralled by dear Mollie, whose love is your due.
O! yield to a sweetness, so rare and so gay,
Which meets nature's mandates that all must obey
To rise in life's conflict, to win great renown,
To rule as a master, and wear glory's crown!
Assert, O! dear Walter, the rights that are yours,
And seize the enchantment a man so adores!

(They now reverse, going around in the opposite direction.)

Yes, seize the enchantment a man so adores!
Assert, O! dear Walter, the rights that are yours,—
To rule as a master, to wear glory's crown,
To rise in life's conflict, and win great renown!
O! meet nature's mandates, that all must obey,

And yield to a sweetness, so rare and so gay!
For now we are planning to start you anew,
Enthralled by dear Mollie, whose love is your due.

(They pull on their garlands and are slowly dragging him over to the door.)

“Sight.”

Come with us, Walter!

“Sound.”

Yes, Walter, come.

“Smell.”

Come, for we love you,—

“Touch.”

And want you to live!

“Taste.”

So come with us, come with us, come!

Walter.

(Ecstatically)—Mollie! Mollie!

(Enter “LOYALTY,” a beautiful woman, clad in simple white, from the right side of the stage. Takes his right hand in her left, and holds up the old family sword in her right hand. The sword may be studded with electric lights so as to shine. White spot light is thrown on “LOYALTY,” the rest of the stage being in crimson.)

“Loyalty.”

Behold! O, dear Walter, the old family sword,—
A sign of bright honor to men of their word!
You swore, you remember, to stand by your trust,
A knight, always loyal, let come what come must!
Mere slaves are the Senses,—as such have their place;
Enthroned as High Rulers, would ruin the race!

So cling to the Ideals of pure, noble life,
Impelled by the yearning that longs for a wife:
The fate of Society and hope of mankind
Demand, beyond question, this truth, you will find!
Then spurn the mad pleadings of ignoble folly,
And give a denial to picturesque Mollie!

Walter.

(As if rousing from a dream)—Away with these enchantments!

(The "FIVE SENSES" run away, with a wail, and "LOYALTY" disappears. Stage is illuminated.)

My God! What a strange predicament is this—drifting—drifting—in the whirling stream of passion, to what distant, unknown shore? In a sense I love her—tenderly—and the tie would grow deeper—deeper—but could only lead to tragedy and disgrace! Poor, dear, impulsive girl—a stray in the wilderness, all alone! I shall write you a long, long letter tonight, dear Mollie—your friend forever—with deep distress of mind—but we must part. It is the only way. But this brings me to a better understanding of myself, for my true faith belongs to Marjorie, the incomparable, majestic woman! And now I know beyond a doubt that I love her,—Marjorie!

(Enter Hector Cloman, Nellie and Marjorie, talking and laughing. They are carrying huge armfuls of wildflowers. Marjorie is crowned with a wreath of flowers, which she has woven. They are all gay and frolicking.)

Nellie.

My Black-eyed-Susans are the nicest, grown in the image of the sun itself.

Hector.

My daisies are finer, as rich as gold and as bright as silver.

Marjorie.

Nay, my wild roses are the best of all, blushing at the sun's kisses, and yielding sweet perfumes to the caresses of the gentle wind.

Nellie.

Blushes, kisses and caresses, oh! fie!

Walter.

Are you Queen of the May, with your crown of flowers?

Marjorie.

This is not May, but June, and I am no queen; but the flowers are a tribute to the beauty of your meadows.

Walter.

Though not Queen of the May, you still are a queen, and the flowers of nature are well placed on the flower of womanhood.

Nellie.

O, hear! The wind blows and blows, and changes!

Marjorie.

These are to decorate your cabin and remind you of us when we are gone.

(They place the flowers around in jars, pitchers, etc.)

Hector.

There are colors enough to paint a rainbow with.

Nellie.

The rainbow comes with storms.

Marjorie.

But it is a sign of peace.

Walter.

And so are these.

Nellie.

Why don't you thank us?

Walter.

I do—all of you.

Nellie.

Which one most?

(A pause. Nellie takes the wreath from Marjorie's head.)

Marjorie picked these and wove them into shape.

Walter.

They are very beautiful.

Nellie.

And sweet. Smell.

(Holds the wreath to Walter's nose.)

Like everything that Marjorie does, it is well done.
Don't you agree with me?

Walter.

Decidedly.

Nellie.

See if Marjorie's handiwork becomes you.

(Puts the wreath on Walter's head.)

Strange, how well it does. Hector, let us go and pack.

Hector.

I was just thinking of that myself.

(Exit Hector, Nellie following. She stops at the door, looks back longingly a few moments. Then exit Nellie.)

Marjorie.

You look like some great victor in his pride,
Wearing triumphant laurels of success.

Walter.

Your dainty fingers wove their flowery strands.
(*Removes the wreath from his head.*)

But what I win will you consent to wear?

(*Puts the wreath on Marjorie.*)

As reigning queen, let me enthrone and crown you!
May I swear out my heart and soul allegiance?

Marjorie.

But would my rule, you think, be just and gentle?

Walter.

Both.

Marjorie.

This evening is the last we spend together.

Walter.

I doubt it.

Marjorie.

We leave tomorrow and you stay here.

Walter.

My plans are changed. I'm going to go with you.

Marjorie.

(*Elated*)—To go with us? Oh, Walter!

Walter.

Away far from the rugged wilderness,
And back to Baltimore.

Marjorie.

Oh! Joy!

Walter.

To mope and sulk no more ;
But, taking hold of life anew, to pit
My manhood's force against the open world!

Marjorie.

Oh!

Walter.

Marjorie, a man alone is incomplete ;
Kind nature knows, and yearns to fill the gap ;
And woman is the making of a man.

Marjorie.

The best of men requires the best of women—
In the making!

Walter.

The best of women insures the best of men—
In the taking!

Marjorie.

Anita, by far, outshines the rest of her sex.

Walter.

The virtues that please in one, in others would vex!

Marjorie.

Anita is tall and slim.

Walter.

Undoubtedly, so are you.

Marjorie.

The glint of her eyes is brown.

Walter.

The glory of yours is blue.

Marjorie.

Her teeth are as white as snow.

Walter.

Like pearls, glisten yours, in row.

Marjorie.

Her cheeks, of a damask hue.

Walter.

The bloom of a peach suits you.

Marjorie.

Her locks in black strands, unfold.

Walter.

And yours, in spun coils of gold.

Marjorie.

Her smile is her sweetest part.

Walter.

And yours puts to shame all art.

Marjorie.

Love's joy consecrates her heart.

Walter.

In you, it ennobles each part.

Marjorie.

You take me not seriously. I meant you well.

Walter.

I take you,—most seriously! Time will tell!

Marjorie.

Then, since you won't listen, and turn all into fun,
I ought to be going,—it is time now to run!

(Marjorie going, Walter following.)

Walter.

The fun's just beginning, and you can't run away,
For I'll follow after,—forever and a day!

*(Walter takes Marjorie by the hand
and holds her.)*

Walter.

But do you really want to run away?

Marjorie.

(Coyly.)—Well, not if you want me to stay with you.

Walter.

I do want you to stay with me—always;
For no one else can satisfy my heart!
But you alone can make existence perfect;
Achieve the consummation of all desires;—
Surmount the heights and bridge the depths of life!
I want your love in fair exchange for mine!
Can you love me, Marjorie?—Will you love me?
Do you love me?

Marjorie.

I have loved you all my life!

*(Walter clasps her eagerly in his
arms, and they kiss.)*

CURTAIN.

A KNIGHTLY HERITAGE



Appendix

A PLAY is essentially a work of art, and its first purpose is to entertain. Nevertheless, running through the stream of soul-pictures, mental imagery and dramatic movements, there should be a sense of ethical structure. While it would tire the general reader to go to any great extent into the underlying philosophy of the play, a short analysis of the characters and of the final climax is apt to be interesting, serving as a key to the rest of the work.

The PROLOGUE shows a world movement from a fighting, or chivalrous age, into the mercenary age. Gov. Vernon belongs to the old school and perceiving this movement tries to readjust the family which he represents to the new conditions. In doing so he shows the venturesome spirit of the soldier, and at the same time, a lack of business precaution, by overreaching himself and going into debt more heavily than his means justify. Walter pays for this lack of business training through years of deprivation, and just escapes being ruined. It may be seen all through that Walter belongs to the old age in tastes and standards, and not to the new.

GREEN MOSS VALLEY stands for the Idyllic World, or that of Nature; and Baltimore for the Institutional World, or that of Society.

The play deals with the conflict between the Material and the Ideal; between the Impulsive and the Rational; between the Natural and the Institutional; between the Sensual and the Spiritual; between the Dishonest and the Honest; between Egoism and Altruism. These many qualities are found in differing degrees in the various characters.

The IDEALIST is apt to be an altruist, long-sighted, and inspired by a sense of merit and service. The MATERIALIST, on the other hand, is more egoistic, with a narrower view, and is imbued with a spirit of competition for personal advancement, rather than with the more altruistic sense of merit and service. The materialist is more harsh, self-assertive and pretentious than the idealist.

WALTER VERNON is an idealist, an altruist, a rationalist, and at the same time is impelled by strong impulses of nature, hence he responds both to the idyllic and the institutional worlds. His ends are far reaching and high. They not only strive for objective purposes, but include intense subjective states of mind and high flights of fancy. He is not competitive, or exactly self-assertive, but rather expects to attain ends through merit and service. He is knightly and chivalrous. He is of a poetic temperament, possessing brilliant imagination and the keenest emotional sensibilities, ranging from the lower passions up through the gamut to the highest spiritual aspirations. Though keenly susceptible to the impulses of nature, he nevertheless is controlled by rational will as the dominating factor.

The CLIMAX of the play is in the fourth act. It shows a conflict between the attractions of the natural world appealing to the natural man (in Walter Vernon) through the senses, and the higher beauties and purposes of the institutional world appealing to the spiritual man. The "five senses" and "loyalty," abstract qualities personified by beautiful young women, really exist only in Walter's mind, representing different levels of his own personality, or lower and higher forms of evolutionary development;—producing a conflict between the sensual and the spiritual;—between the heredity of untold ages gone, and the dawning reign of reason; between the impulsive and the rational. Starting probably one hundred million years ago and evolving by slow degrees from the minutest germ, all life in its earlier stages was controlled by the senses and instincts of nature. These blind natural forces still persist with undiminished vigor normally and properly in the lower realms of our personality, and reason does not seek to destroy them, but only to guide them in accordance with the highest ends.

Walter comes of a family who for generations have rendered altruistic services to the institutional world of society, and this heredity is strong in him. He, an idealist, has, however, passed through a period of disillusionment in which he has rubbed up against the world of human realities, and has been brought face to face with the selfishness, sordidness, shallowness and materialism of mankind. His own high ideas of life have failed of fruition, and he has practically been slighted, scorned and rejected by the material world of society, reaching a crisis at the end of the third act. It is not merely a matter of disappointed love, but he is temperamentally at outs with his whole environment, and feels the lack of harmony and his exclusion from modern life. With a lofty pride of family and a hereditary sense of caste, of public spirit, of distinction and of glory,

he finds himself judged and rated by a money standard only. His higher traits of personal character fail of being appreciated altogether. While still smarting from these wounds, he returns to the natural world in Green Moss Valley and finds a solace in its wild attractions which, to say the least, are thoroughly genuine and without guile. Mollie Weymes, who is exquisite in many ways, and non-institutional rather than immoral, shows every inclination to retain him in the wilderness, dragging him away from the institutional world altogether. In the reaction from his disillusionment in the world of human realities, he is especially susceptible to the allurements of this situation centered around Mollie. But on the other hand there has been going on within him for some time a new inward growth (which he himself has caught but occasional glimpses of) under the influence of Marjorie Knollys. This is a spiritual development which in perfection would fulfill all the highest demands of his manhood and of life. Marjorie's influence so far has not taken full possession of him, but has rather touched the spiritual side of his nature only. Mollie excites the natural man, that is the primitive passions, and in so doing completes his emancipation from the charms of Nellie Bostwick, with whom he was recently in love. But Walter finds two obstacles in the way of the attraction that Mollie exerts. One is the recrudescence of his early training, with its adhesion to social ethics. The other is the entire incompatibility of Mollie's influence with that of Marjorie. He cannot follow both—one must be surrendered. The realization of this fact is unfolded in his own mind in that sharp subjective conflict which produces, as it were, the imagery of the "five senses" and "loyalty." He chooses the higher course, and in so doing all the excitement of his primitive passions, aroused by Mollie, swings over in accord with his higher spiritual needs, making Marjorie the sole recipient of the ardent glow of his whole nature. Through Marjorie he is thus weaned from the wilderness, cured of the misanthropy following upon disappointed love and the general disillusionment of experience, and is restored to the full efficiency of life among his fellow creatures in harmony with the institutional and spiritual worlds, giving full scope to all of his powers of soul, mind and body. The old family of the old regime, which he represents, is thus readjusted to the new age. Marjorie, who has always loved Walter, thinking Walter was in love with her, nearly betrayed her love for him in the second act unasked. Being much abashed at this narrow escape, she thereafter carefully avoided any display of warmth for him more than a friendly interest in his welfare, restraining herself to the point of coolness in other

respects. For this reason her power over Walter is mostly a spiritual one up to the climax in the fourth act, which is forced through the impulsive impetuosity of Mollie Weymes. But now that Walter has asked for Marjorie's love and received her confession, the warmth and richness of her truly feminine nature will manifest its ardor, insuring their mutual happiness.

MOLLIE WEYMES is a child of nature. She is guided by impulse almost exclusively. She is warm, loyal, meaning right, spontaneously exuberant in desiring the beautiful, in joy, happiness, freedom, expansiveness. Her natural purpose in life is love, wifehood, motherhood. She is extremely poetical, is an idealist, ignores material considerations, follows her soul; but is swayed by impulse alone, without due rational control. Being married through an act of impulse and without reason (for mere obedience to a parent is no valid ground for entering into matrimony without love), she learns to hate her husband and is too natural, too moral, to live with him whom she hates. She rejects him and flies to the idyllic world in the heart of nature. Thus severed from society through her own impulsive nature, it is apparent that Mollie would be willing to throw over the institutional world altogether in favor of the natural world to be happy with Walter. To sum up her character, she opposes impulse to reason, the natural world to the institutional, the wilderness to human society.

MARJORIE KNOLLYS, in contrast to Mollie, is the orderly woman, governed by rational judgment, accepting the institutional world and human society. She is an exalted idealist, and an altruist, reaching the highest attainment of spiritual beauty. She is the true woman, revealing the ethical world in a moral realm above the vicissitudes of life, whatever they may be, and yet through adversity trained to meet the material world with practical purposes. She is the chief thread in the mediatorial movement, and through her Walter finds the normal unity of life, meeting all the requirements of both the ideal and the material, not disregarding either realm, but establishing an even balance, or equipoise, between the two, insuring the triumph of life.

NELLIE BOSTWICK is a partial idealist, but more of a worldling, and is rather shallow than otherwise. She responds temperamentally to the ideal, but is not willing to sacrifice any mundane interests for it. She is very tender-hearted, and while not at all a coquette, she lets Walter be led into hoping he will win her because she has not the heart to crush his hopes, her tender-heartedness causing more suffering than it saves. Man to man, she would have preferred Walter to Hector Cloman, but married the latter on account of financial advantages.

MRS. BOSTWICK is a thorough materialist and egoist. She is self-assertive, harsh in judgment, pretentious and competitive on all occasions, and only understands that selfishness of will which takes and holds all that it can grasp.

HECTOR CLOMAN, in contrast to Walter Vernon, is not an idealist. He is a materialist, but the highest of that type. He belongs entirely to the objective world, and has no subjective states. He is perfectly true, clean, straight, honest, forceful. Business is his chief aim, his absorbing purpose; but his methods are worthy. He has no great passion, no poetry, no very tender sentiment, no romance. He is exclusively rational and has no impulse. He is filled with truth but not knightliness.

WILIE STOKES is a shallow-brained fop; his chief end in life being an exaggerated sense of his own importance. His aims are all follies based on self-conceit, vanity and egotism. His ends are comically nugatory in chasing the phantom of self-importance that has no real existence.

PETER HUTCHINS has no ideals of any sort. "Money" expresses all the value of life to him, and its entire scope of ethics. "Get rich" is his only conceivable stimulus to action.

CLYDE MURDOCK is of a low order of mental culture, but he is loyal and honest. He has some common vices, but is "square." Peter Hutchins, on the other hand, although shrewd and mentally strong, is a fraud and a trickster. In the last act, therefore, we see Murdock, loyal to Walter, kicking Peter, who is his superior in every way except the moral, out of the door.

AUG 10 1964

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